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*A SEARCH FOR INSIGHTS INTO THE CREATIVE PROCESSES UTILIZED WITHIN THE VISUAL ARTS:*

*SHIFTING FOCUS (1991-2006): FIFTEEN YEARS OF CONFLICT AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE ARTISTIC WORK OF NOEL ROBBINS*

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by

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**DEDICATION**

The author wishes to dedicate this dissertation to

Mrs. Ethel May Boenicke.

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In an effort to enhance art education, and to garner a better understanding of the artistic individual, arts-based research emphasizing cognitive case studies, or process examination have been conducted; several should be noted for their contributions to this study. First, are the cognitive case studies conducted by Franklin (1989), Gardner (1997), and Gruber and Wallace (2001); second, are studies emphasizing artistic processes conducted by Beittel (1973), and Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976).

It is the author's contention that cognition, intuition, and sensory experience, contribute to the successful production of a work of art. A documented history of arts-based research has been conducted inside the classroom, therefore this dissertation focuses on the integration of cognitive, intuitive, and sensory aspects of the creative process utilized by an artist working in a natural setting.

It is appropriate to characterize this research as a longitudinal study of the creative process utilized by the accomplished artist Noel Robbins. The author deems Robbins as "accomplished" having earned the highest academic degree, the Master of Fine Arts, and recognition from the artistic community at large.

It is challenging for an individual that has been professionally trained as an artist to remain objective while conducting research within her respective discipline. Therefore, the author utilized a phenomenological approach incorporating data

triangulation, along with peer and member checking.

Robbins's artistic process was analyzed using the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA) developed by Gruber and his associates (2001), whereby purpose, affect, and knowledge were examined. Insights were sought concerning changes within Robbins's artwork over a 15-year period.

Self-directed art production (Ulbricht, 2005, Wilson, 2005), termed by Wilson "the third pedagogical site" (p. 1), offers an alternative to the prescribed media/technique-oriented artwork emphasized in the schools. This is consistent with Robbins's artistic process that the author analyzed.

This author posits that it is only through continued micro-aesthetic investigations of artistic processes that art educators will be able to fully embrace Dewey's (1934) belief that the connection between art and its relationship to society and nature is not only an intellectual (conscious) bond, but also an intuitive and sensory connection as well.

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# Chapter I

## 1. The Problem

1.1 **Background** to the problem. Establish the broad context for the problem with three to five references to sources that speak to a question, need or area that needs further investigation.

1.2 **Statement of the problem/research question**. Based on the literature, the problem is often stated in a precise fashion in which all elements of inquiry are brought into relationship. All terms should be defined according to the literature, not by an arbitrary common sense dictionary view.

## The Problem

The literature concerning creativity and the creative process distinguished between Divine and human acts of creation. Divine creativity (Arieti, 1976) was "ex nihilo," meaning "from nothing" (p. 3). Elaborating on the difference, Lewis (1971) stated:

> The first creative act according to the Bible was the creation of the universe brought into existence out of the void by an act of Divine Will. To make something appear where nothing stood before is considered a miracle … human creativity is understood to be of a different sort. When Man creates, he begins with things that already exist and finds a new way of relating them. (p. 32)

Divine creativity was unique in that something was brought into existence where nothing previously had existed before. Unlike Divine creation, human creativity involved selecting and combining existing elements in new and innovative ways.

This study was specifically concerned with human creativity as expressed within the creative processes, utilized within the visual arts. Artistic creativity has a long and honorable history; its arms stretch far back into the distant past. With enormous variation, but without interruption, our history had been traced through the visual artifacts that had been created. Mankind (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) was linked by way of an expansive artistic continuum extending from the caves of Lascaux and Altamira,

approximately 40,000 years ago, to the present day. Every known culture and peoples, without exception, left behind a legacy of visual art. Even the Etruscans (Garrett Bowman, 1992), whose language and texts had never been deciphered, were vividly portrayed through the profusion of tombs, temples, vases, paintings, and sculptures that had been unearthed. Throughout history visual artists had played an enduring role in the history of mankind.

My personal interest in creativity as a topic for research began many years hence. Beginning in early childhood, for nearly half a century, making works of art had been an on-going part of my life; for the past 30 years I taught, and continue to teach art. Throughout the journey, my curiosity about the creative process grew. Over the years, I came to realize that the artistic process involved multiple, complex, and interwoven dimensions. Four of the most fascinating were cognition, intuition, sensory perception, and action. The decision to focus on these areas in my research grew from the pressing need I saw for expanding our insights concerning the ways these aspects worked in concert to promote creativity within the individual.

Art educators, artists, psychologists, and other professionals have had various degrees of interest in the subject of creativity as it applied to the teaching of art; therefore I reviewed the subject and followed with why this study was needed now.

**Background**

It was essential to describe some of the insights, theories, and research studies in art and art education that preceded, and influenced the formation of the research problem, and to develop the rationale for a study intended to examine extraordinary artists' and learners' ways of knowing, working, and making art. With regard to the early years of education in America, creativity, the topic of my dissertation, was not mentioned in relation to art instruction. During the 1770s Ben Franklin (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) advocated for the inclusion of art instruction in the schools. Individual communities (Smith, 1996) attempted to sponsor art education in public schools during the early 1800s, however the first statewide attempt was made in Horace Mann's publication of Peter Schmid's system of drawing instruction in 1844 and 1845. Schmid's system (Smith,

1996) promoted a rigid and mechanical style of drawing rather than one devoted to the development of artistic talent and excitement about making art. Art instruction (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) was highly sporadic during the first half of the 1800s because its inclusion was left solely to the discretion of the individual teacher; in this same timeframe mechanical drawing was first offered as an aid to penmanship. The Massachusetts Free Instruction in Drawing Act of 1870 (Smith, 1996) was generally cited as the "official" starting point for art education in American schools; it was put in place to promote America's standing as a competitive industrial and manufacturing nation.

Those involved in art education, as well as psychologists and theorists began to take an interest in creativity toward the end of the 19th century, but that interest did not peak until the middle of the 20th century. During the 1950s, both teachers and supervisors (Wilson, 1971) supported the idea that the development of creativity was one of the most important goals for art education and a large number of research studies were conducted in this area. Wilson (1971) called this period of unprecedented interest in, and passion for, creativity a "groundswell phenomenon" (p. 3).

The relationship between education and creativity that reached its zenith in the middle of the 20th century began to form gradually, and it was not until the end of the 19th century that new developments in art education slowly moved toward recognizing the importance of creativity. In the 1880s the Child Study Movement and the efforts of G. Stanley Hall (Eisner & Ecker, 1966), along with the availability of inexpensive watercolors and crayons, promoted new concepts such as a liberalized art curriculum that emphasized imagination and the child's developmental stages of visual expression. Expanded interest in creativity (Wilson, 1971) may have begun in 1899 when the Committee of Ten on Drawing (Klar, Winslow, & Kirby, 1933) stated as one of its goals: "To develop the creative impulse" (p. 27).

**The Progressives**

During the first three decades of the 20th century, the proponents of progressive education expressed a belief in the power of education to awaken creativity within the child. According to Dewey's progressive ideology (1938), education should promote the

cultivation and expression of individuality, free activity, experiential learning, and an acquaintance with the changing world. These ideas presented a major break from the traditional educational methods of the past that were teacher-centered by comparison and were directed externally by the teacher rather than internally by the student. Traditional education promoted the idea of the mind being molded from outside the individual; this theory was contrary to the one espoused by Dewey.

The idea of child-centered learning was supported by progressive figures such as Dewey (1938), Rugg & Schumaker (1928), and Hall (1911). Dewey's theory (1902) included four unique elements that were designed to foster creativity and self-discovery within the learner. First was the idea that learning came from within the child, second, learning was not imposed from the outside, third, the self-realization of the child, not knowledge, was the ultimate goal, and fourth, the child's personal interests should be foremost in curricular considerations.

Facts were dead to the child (Dewey, 1902) unless they were able to spark interest in the child and related to his experiences. Dewey (1910) believed that the curriculum should allow for something new to be presented so as to stimulate the child's imagination. Dewey (1910) stated:

> If the situation as a whole presents something novel and hence uncertain, the entire response is not mechanical, because this mechanical operation is put to use in solving a problem. There is no end to this spiral process: foreign subject matter transformed through thinking into a familiar possession becomes a resource for judging and assimilating additional foreign subject matter. (p. 223)

Dewey (1990) believed that not only should facts presented in a child-centered curriculum be interesting, they should also relate to something significant in the child's life (prior knowledge). Locating study materials (Dewey, 1997) that related to prior knowledge was only the starting point; the next phase involved the gradual development of past experiences into a more complex form, similar to the way subject matter was presented to an adult learner.

Neither Dewey's support for stimulating subject matter of interest to the child, nor his admonition to relate present learning experiences to prior knowledge, had been adequately researched in relationship to art education. The importance of selecting one's own subject matter was a problem-posing issue that artists had long dealt with when not in the confines of a classroom situation where they were told what to paint or draw and given only specific instruments with which to work. Eisner (1997) took the idea of selecting one's own subject matter even further to include the artist's choice of materials, he stated: "What you choose to use to think with affects what you can think about" (p. 350). I believed Eisner was talking about thinking with ones materials and being able to make free choices about the materials depending on what one was trying to say in his or her artwork. For children in a classroom setting, the selection of what to think with had already been made, usually by their instructor. The role of choice, as to subject matter and materials, was an area of art education that had not been adequately researched. This research explored the relationship between the artist's freedom to choose his/her materials and subject matter, and their ability to think and act creatively.

Additionally, Dewey favored relating prior knowledge to present educational experiences. Inquiry into what role/s the learner's past life experiences played in the fabrication of works of art was another area of research in which there was a dearth of information. This research was designed to offer insights into ways that past and present knowledge (cognitive, intuitive, and sensory) combined to promote creativity and heuristic learning experiences.

**Modernism**

Modernism has had a powerful influence on the discourse concerning art, art education, and research throughout the 20th century, and continuing into our own time. Some of the major movements, concepts, and events associated with modernity (Barrett, 2000) were, democracy, capitalism, industrialism, science, urbanization, freedom, the individual, and commodification. Philosophically, the modernists believed that unified, coherent, and universally applicable truths could be discovered, that theory could mirror reality, and the individual was a unified rational being. The interpretivist/constructivist

research paradigm (Patton, 2002) was modern in its conception. It placed the role of the individual in a crucial position; a person's perceptions (Patton, 2002) constituted the truly important reality. Weber (as cited in Crotty, 1998) stated: "…the individual is also the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct" (p. 68).

Artistic Modernity developed (Barrett, 2000) during the second half of the nineteenth century as an outgrowth of the social and political revolutions in Europe; artists were no longer bound by the old system of patronage controlled by the church or wealthy and powerful individuals. Art became more personal (Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, 2001; Barrett, 2000) with the artists rejecting the restrictions placed on them by the academies of the 1700s and the conservative juries in the late 1800`s. The end of the 19th century saw a rise in the works produced by artists who radically broke with the traditions of the past; artists such as Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Ce'zanne were setting the stage for modernism to flourish in the 20th century. The inner life of the artist was coming to the forefront and the uniqueness of expression was given credence among artists, art educators, and art critics. The creative individual was assuming a place of privilege in the art world.

Originally, modernism (Holt, 1990) began with the concept of the avant-garde artist who was politically radical, liberal, and idealistic in thinking that he could bring about social change; he rejected what he felt was a society held back by stifling cultural conservatism. Over the years, however, modernism (Holt, 1990) became more conservative, in part due to the threat of fascism. Greenberg and Adorno, both highly influential proponents of modernism (Holt, 1990), sought to make a clear distinction between fine art and the art of popular culture that they felt was abusive in its use of art for both propaganda and political purposes; they supported the apolitical concept of art-for-art's sake. Greenberg (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) helped to eliminate the sociopolitical dimension that had dominated early modernism due to his insistence on separating the avant-garde from popular culture, thereby widening the gap between the artist and the general public. Greenberg helped to entrench the place of the artist as a creative entity, unaffected by pop culture, producing works of art motivated from within.

The concept of modernism had a distinctive relationship to creativity. Creativity, in respect to the modernist view, was dictated and bounded by the artist's individual world. Due, in part, to the rise of capitalism, and the emphasis on self-expression, the creative process turned inward. Additionally, modernism was influenced by Freud's concept of the unconscious aspect of the mind. The psyche of the artist, both mental and emotional, became the main consideration in making art. The modern artist was free to explore his/her inner landscape. Indeed, the inner landscape dictated the subject, content and form of the finished work. In the proposed study, a broader conception of the artist and his/her creative processes was considered. Personal histories, purpose, knowledge, and affective influences were examined in relationship to their positive or negative influence on creativity. The effects of both external and internal forces on creativity were considered in light of the fact that artists did not live, work, make, or present their work in a vacuum.

**Formalism and Abstract Expressionism**

Modernism had many facets, however two areas of particular concern for artists, art educators, and scholars interested in creativity inquiry were formalism and abstract expressionism. In formalism the basic elements and principles of art were the main focus. Both Bell and Fry (Smith, 1996; Barrett, 2000) posited that the "significant form" of the artwork was the main concern; they rejected any serious consideration of the artist's intent, the subject matter, narration, or any reference to reality.

Dow (Smith, 1996) was the first renowned art instructor to teach formalism as a basic theory of art. Not everyone who worked with Dow accepted the idea that subject matter and emotional content were unimportant concerns in the making of a work of art. Even Dow's most famous student Georgia O'Keeffe (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) reduced her images to pure form and color in an effort to heighten their expressiveness. O'Keeffe (Cowart, 1987) had this to say about her work: "A red hill doesn't touch everyone's heart as it touches mine, and I suppose there is no reason it should" (p. 138). Art educators (Smith, 1996) willingly adopted Dow's ideas for teaching artistic elements and principles, however they did not unanimously subscribe to the anti-emotional aspect

of his theory. It was not difficult to see why art educators greeted the expressive theories and practices of Viktor Lowenfeld with enthusiasm and acceptance during the 1940s and 1950s. This study assumed that affect is an important component in the creative process that should be examined in relationship to cognition and sensory perception.

At the same time that Dow was developing his ideas about the basic principles of composition and ways they could be taught, Sargent was looking at drawing and its relationship to thought. Sargent (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) was focusing on the process of drawing as a language and as a means of visualizing one's thoughts. According to Eisner and Ecker (1966), the concept of art as a cognitive activity was not fully understood or recognized. The proposed inquiry examined cognitive function and its relationship to image production, intuition, and sensory perception in the promotion of artistic creativity.

Along with formalism, abstract expressionism played a vigorous role in the dialogue about art and education in the modern era. The abstract expressionists had very specific views about art and the role of the artist. They (Barrett, 2000) accepted the modernist view that placed the individual at the center of the universe. Like the existentialists, the abstract expressionists subscribed to the idea of individual freedom; they viewed abstraction as a vehicle for psychic expression. They felt the properties of the paint itself were of crucial importance to the process of picture making. The abstract expressionists acknowledged the importance of the psychic and physical aspects of creativity - both concerns of the proposed study.

**Lowenfeld**

Interest in creative development through art education grew at a much faster pace during the 1940s and 1950s due in part to the work of Viktor Lowenfeld whose ideas were closely aligned with those of the abstract expressionists. Like the abstract expressionists, Lowenfeld (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) regarded the process of making the art as more important than the finished product, he saw the good and heroic artist as one who lacked historical and cultural burdens, and he viewed society as having a negative effect on artistic development. Lowenfeld and the abstract expressionists were in agreement about the need for a clear distinction between fine art and pop art or kitsch.

Lowenfeld's contributions were significant to the field of art education for a variety of reasons. His psychological system (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) became one of the major approaches to teacher training in art during the mid 20th century; additionally he brought together many of the teaching practices and theories about art education that had developed throughout the Progressive Era. Creativity and self-expression gained new prominence because his speeches, articles and books such as *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947; 1952; 1957) were widely read and disseminated among art educators. It was important also to note that Lowenfeld's work (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) became influential because of its scientific status; he was one of the few art educators to publish in psychological journals.

Many art teachers accepted Lowenfeld's ideas about the role of the child in art education. His child-centered approach (Smith, 1996) appealed to some teachers because it was closely aligned with the already accepted child-centered practices of Cane, Naumburg, and Cole. Also, embracing his ideas were teachers who wanted to make art more accessible to their students by having the child look inward for ideas rather than outward for instruction. Students (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) were discouraged from looking at, or copying adult art, or artwork made by other artists. Was it possible that Lowenfeld was unaware of the countless hours, all well-documented, that Michelangelo spent in the chapel at Padua drawing from the frescoes of Giotto, or the now famous photograph taken over the shoulder of Picasso as he sketched Manet's painting entitled *Luncheon on the Grass*?

Peter Smith (1996) questioned why Lowenfeld was never completely aligned with the modern art movement. It seemed quite clear that Lowenfeld was not able to reconcile his theory of modernism to the practice of artists using external stimuli as sources of inspiration. His view of creativity was focused on non-derivative personal expression, therefore, a truly creative person would not admit, as Picasso did, that his inspiration for the women in *Les Desmoiselles D'Avignon* originated with Iberian sculptures that he had seen in a Paris museum. This study emphasized expansive views of creativity that

included an examination of influences, both external and internal that hindered or promoted creative processes.

Lowenfeld's primary concern for teaching art was not to teach students to make art. His main concern (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) was the growth of the child as a seeing, thinking, and feeling human being. This philosophy detracted from the seriousness and power of the learning and teaching aspects of art instruction and replaced it with an almost total reliance on the psychological, social, and extrinsic benefits of art making. Many of the critics of Lowenfeld's work utilized their opposition in the formation of new ideas that would eventually be incorporated into the practices and beliefs associated with postmodernism.

**Transition from Lowenfeld to Discipline Based Art Education**

Whatever interest in creativity and self-expression that had characterized education in general and art education in particular during the middle of the 20th century began its descent when the Russians (Learning Library, 1996) launched Sputnik I, the first artificial satellite, in 1957. The national goal was to surpass Russia in space exploration and provide for national defense through the promotion of math and science studies. During the 1960s, educators began to emphasize structure rather than freedom in the curriculum. Bruner (1960) believed there was a resurgence of interest in promoting the intellectual aims of education, but without sacrificing the student's training for a future role in a democratic society. He (1960) also sensed a renewed interest in curriculum planning triggered by the scientific revolution of the 20th century. In this environment of increased attention to curriculum planning, Bruner (1960) developed his curriculum theory based on the idea of disciplinary structure.

The basis of Bruner's theory (1960) included four themes: structure, any age learning, intuition, and motivation. The basic idea of Bruner's theory (1960) was that each discipline possessed a distinct structure that could be made known to students. The idea of emphasizing structure (Bruner, 1960) was to find a way to for students to quickly garner a sense of the basic ideas embedded within a particular discipline, thus forming a foundation upon which they could build more complex knowledge in the future.

Bruner (1960) was concerned with any age learning. He began (1960) with the idea "that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (p. 33). The student's initial understanding (Bruner 1960) formed an intellectual basis upon which new knowledge could be built when revisiting the curriculum later on in more and more complex ways, thus the term "spiraling curriculum".

The third theme included in Bruner's curriculum theory (1960) was intuition; he hoped that students would learn to use hunches and insights without going through the traditional analytical and logical approach in thinking.

Bruner's final theme (1960) in his theory was motivation. He offered no specifics as to how it could be generated or maintained, but he did acknowledge that the excitement associated with discovery of unrecognized relationships between ideas engendered in the student a sense of confidence in controlling his own learning. This went along with the postmodern belief that education should promote the emancipation of each student. Bruner (1960) believed that motivation was an aspect of learning that should be researched more thoroughly.

One of the first things that came to mind when thinking about intuition and motivation was creativity. Even though intuition and motivation were both mental activities, they were not generally perceived as cognitive in the same sense that logic and rationality typically are. It was quite unexpected that Bruner included either intuition or motivation in his spiraling curriculum theory because they appeared to be at odds with the shift in educational emphasis during the 1960s towards more, rather than less cognitive control. That Bruner advocated the use of intuition and motivation at a time when the country was fixating on rational and logical solutions to its problems implied that he valued their inclusion in the educational process. How intuition worked in tandem with other mental processes in artistic creation was of enormous interest to the proposed study.

Who would create this new spiraling curriculum? Bruner (1960) stated, "Designing curricula in a way that reflects the basic structure of a field of knowledge

requires the most fundamental understanding of the field. It is a task that cannot be carried out without the active participating of the ablest scholars and scientists" (p. 32). Also included in the curriculum development (Bruner, 1960) were students and teachers who worked in collaboration with specialists in the various disciplines, however, mainly as assistants. In an effort to indicate the importance of the role played by the student, Bruner (1966) revealed that the curriculum represents both the nature of knowledge itself and also the nature of the student. In reality however, it did not appear that the ultimate decisions about the curriculum were ever relinquished to the student or teacher, but remained under the control of the experts.

During the 1960s, Barkan (as cited in Smith, 1996) adopted Bruner's idea of "structure of the disciplines" for art education; he sought to make art more academic by mimicking more traditional subjects. Efland (as cited in Smith, 1996) criticized Barkan's ideas concerning the structure approach to curriculum formation in art education in his article entitled, *How Art Became a Discipline: Looking at Our Recent History*, 1998. Efland (as cited in Smith, 1996) believed that Bruner's approach was not suited to teaching art because it was too scientific; it forced the student to become unengaged and a neutral observer of the subject. Efland (as cited in Smith, 1996) also felt that artists used an engaged, participatory method of working whereby their experiences became the content of their work. John Dewey (as cited in Smith, 1996) took this idea even farther when he said that the viewer of the work of art must recreate or emotionally and intellectually engage in the artist's creating process. For Dewey the creative process was experienced twice, first by the artist in the creation of the work, and second by the viewer in his experiencing of the work. My research dealt with observing the active participation by the artist in the formation of his/her own creations and how that process unfolded in unique ways that brought meaning to the life of the artist and those who observed the work.

**Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE)**

It was difficult to understand the current theories that were being utilized in art education (Cahan & Kocur, 1996) without first acquainting oneself with DBAE. The

momentum and the sphere that had fallen under the influence of DBAE had grown since its inception during the mid-1980s when, as a response to country-wide budget decreases, the schools (Cahan & Kocur, 1996) witnessed a general cut-back in art instruction and the slashing of many art teacher positions. A great number of people supported DBAE because they believed it would bolster art instruction along with the status of art education in the schools. It accomplished many positive things for education, and according to Cahan & Kocur (1996) DBAE was responsible for, "establishing an advocacy network of teachers, administrators, museum professionals, professors in higher education, and funders" (p. xxiii).

In DBAE theory the disciplinary character of art instruction (Hamblen, 1993) was emphasized along with the study of art for art's sake. Art (Cahan & Kocur, 1996) was to become a well-defined academic area with clearly delineated subject matter, operating rules, and objective testing. Prior to the development of DBAE, art instruction (Hamblen, 1993) had emphasized freedom of expression, however proponents of DBAE (Cahan & Kocur, 1996) believed that art consists of a body of knowledge possessing an academic basis; it was not simply a form of self-expression. Post-modern arts educators had been extremely critical of DBAE's focus on discipline (Efland, as cited in Hart, 1991), nevertheless it was because of this strong emphasis on art as an intellectual area of study that endowed it with the status of an academic discipline that it had not previously enjoyed. DBAE also had specific guidelines for assessment. According to DBAE theory, as in other disciplines (Greer & Heopfner, as cited in Hamblen, 1993), learning was measured in a similar manner using pencil-and-paper testing in an effort to standardize both the learning activities in art and the curriculum. Hamblen (1993) revealed that learning was assessed in a DBAE program in a clearly identifiable and formal manner.

The study of art in a DBAE program (Hamblen, 1993) was divided into four disciplines, studio production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. Integrated study of these four areas was promoted, but not the co-mingling of art with other subjects. Eisner (as cited in Cahan & Kocur, 1996) maintained that the uniqueness of art must be

protected in order to keep it from being taken over by subjects that often times were deemed more important to the curriculum.

**Critique of DBAE - parallels to critique in art world**

On both political and philosophical grounds the criticism of DBAE mirrored the art world's larger critique waged by the proponents of postmodern art against supporters of modern art. Politically, postmodernists in both the art world and in art education (Holt, 1990) believed their movements to be liberal reactions to conservative and officially supported movements. No doubt the conservative climate of the 1980s had an effect on the policies of DBAE. Former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett and the former National Endowment for the Arts chairman Frank Hodsoll (Holt, 1990) were both conservative supporters of the Getty Center for the Arts. Conservative views (Holt, 1990) espoused for education in general during the Reagan administration were reflected in support for the essentialist emphasis in art education promoted by the policies disseminated through the Getty Center.

Having the power of a conservative government behind the Getty Center did not deter the opponents of their policies. Peter London, in his introduction to *Beyond DBAE (*as cited in Holt, 1990), expressed dismay that never before in art education had any concept been so generously funded with such determination to see it become the only system of beliefs to the exclusion of all the others. Critics of DBAE's originally published theories were appalled at the brash assumption made by Duke (as cited in Holt, 1990), "that 55,000 copies have been disseminated … providing one indication that DBAE has struck a receptive cord among educators and others" (p. 44). Of course dissemination of materials, even those promoted by powerful political forces, did not mean an overall acceptance of the values and goals of DBAE.

Postmodern educators critical of DBAE (Holt, 1990) cited a long list of adjectives that they felt adequately described DBAE policy; among them were, conservative, formalistic, essentialistic, dogmatic, undemocratic, paternalistic, non-creative, sexist, racist, and reductionist. Other critics (Hamblen, 1993) felt that DBAE's use of sequential instruction and predictable outcomes copied much too closely the rest of education.

Some state departments (Greer & Hoepfner, as cited in Hamblen, 1993) had even begun to develop multiple-choice tests! In the 1990s the Getty Center (Stankiewicz, as cited in Hamblen, 1993) reversed its opinion on objective testing in the arts, admitting that it was not a sufficient measure of artistic proficiency, and advocated for more qualitative forms of assessment that would include portfolios.

Philosophically, concerns expressed by postmodern artists and arts educators bore obvious similarities in two areas, the Classical Ideal of high art and essentialism. DBAE theory (Lanier, as cited in Holt, 1990) was based on the Classical Ideal that made a clear distinction between high art which attempted to express ideal form and low art that exemplified practical, commercial, or comical intentions. This view (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) was in extreme contrast to the post-modernists' more inclusive and accepting stance that was also less elitist. Postmodernists in both camps voiced support for the use of artistic images that derived from non-Western and minority cultures as well as from popular culture. John Dewey (1934) stated: "Usually there is a hostile reaction to a conception of art that connects it with the activities of a live creature in its environment. The hostility to association of fine art with normal processes of living is a pathetic, even a tragic, commentary on life as it is ordinarily lived" (p. 27).

**Postmodernism**

During the latter part of the 20th century postmodernism surfaced as another important theory in the continuing dialogue about art, research and art education. Just as scholars did not agree on a unified definition of postmodernism (Schutz, 2000), neither did they agree on its starting date (Barrett, 2000). Some theorists (Barrett, 2000) felt that it began in 1968, with the student riots in Paris; others dated its beginning as late as the 1980s.

Even though a generally accepted definition of postmodernism was unavailable, nevertheless, some of its most widely held beliefs could be discussed and its more salient qualities could be described. Post-modernism (Janson, 1995) was the antithesis of modernism; it opposed the existing world order as well as the values on which it was based. Some characteristics of postmodern thought (Janson, 1995) included, a rejection

of humanism and the idea of universality, subjective and conflicting interpretations were all that could be offered and those varied according to context, and postmodernism held the belief that all aesthetic systems throughout the world were equal. being by revealing that people interpret reality, however reality did not speak directly to us by dictating what was good Wood, Cole, and Gealt (1989) argued that contemporary art was being held together solely by its intellectual and theoretical basis - without regard to the style that was being used by the artist.

The postmodernists (Barrett, 2000) believed that our perspective on truth and knowledge was limited; they stressed that facts were simply interpretations and all knowledge was mediated by language and culture; the "self" was a mere by-product of language, the unconscious, and social relationships. Loyal Rue (as cited in Crotty, 1998) expressed the postmodernist conception of the nature of, beautiful, or true because inherently reality did not possess qualities, value-laden or otherwise. This was quite different from the modernist idea (Patton, 2000) that the only truly important reality was the one perceived by the individual. According to the postmodernists, the individual (Barrett, 2000) was no longer the center of the universe and they downplayed the individual's ability to promote change or be creative. This attitude may be partially the reason for the dearth of creativity inquiry over the last 25 years. The postmodernists (Barrett, 2000) accepted the limitations of multiple views, fragmentation, and indeterminancy. Their beliefs were complex and, for many, confusing as well.

Agreement by educational theorists on the vast majority of postmodern issues seemed impossible, nevertheless, they (Schutz, 2000) did seem to agree that postmodernism was about teaching freedom – either individually or collectively. It was not the clear-cut freedom of psychic expression however that was promoted by the abstract expressionists or through Lowenfeld's approach. In actuality the postmodernists (Schutz, 2000) did not offer a clear statement about freedom because they believed that it would be too confining and would leave them open to more criticism, (if this were even possible); they posited that by thinking we knew the truth about freedom, destroyed

freedom. As educators they (Schutz, 2000) felt that we were unable to avoid the mixture of empowerment and oppression, and the balancing of possibilities and limitations.

Society, according to the postmodern theorists, was a negative force that worked against the individual. They (Schutz, 2000) were fearful of losing freedom due to losing places for marginalized individuals to exist and they feared the "normalization" of the individual. These were all major concerns of educators in every field of education, not only art. The proposed inquiry sought to discover ways of providing individuals a space where their uniqueness was celebrated and encouraged.

In an effort to steer away from "normalization" Schutz (2000) offered various postmodern perspectives on teaching freedom. Hannah Arendt (as cited in Schutz, 2000) believed that individuals achieved freedom through participation with others on shared projects. She seemed to be afraid of an individual attempting to achieve freedom by looking inward and developing his/her individuality – that this somehow isolated him/her from society. While it is true that many artists relish working alone, nevertheless, many art forms thrived on community efforts such as theatre productions and of course the musicians in a symphony.

Rorty, (as cited in Schutz, 2000) believed that individuals achieved freedom through isolated artistic activity and that the artist changed the shared practices of the community through the creation of art objects. He then advocated for a strange thing, Rorty (as cited in Schutz, 2000) felt that the art objects found in society should not focus on actual individuals and that the artist's identities should be kept anonymous because they ran the risk of becoming "aesthetic monsters" disconnected and working against active moral structures. He did not say what he meant by "active moral structures" or why working against them might be bad. Artists make art for many reasons, some of which may not be pleasant in either concept or finished art product. Any definition of teaching freedom must acknowledge the artists' right to choose their imagery and to sign or not sign their work as the individual artist saw fit. Maxine Greene (as cited in Schutz, 2000) sought to promote aesthetic education through the creation of the Lincoln Center Institute whose goal was to initiate students and teachers into the aesthetic practice of

freedom. Art is a discipline with a structure that had evolved out of a long historical context, thus it seemed at odds with the postmodern notion of teaching freedom; Greene (as cited in Schutz, 2000) supported the idea that students should be taught the symbol systems associated with the various art forms, justifying this stance by concluding that these established symbol systems helped students to find their own alterity and its place in the world. Unlike many other postmodern theorists, Greene (as cited in Schultz, 2000) did offer a definition of alterity, albeit through this quote of Denis Donahue: "…the margin is the place for those feelings and intuitions which daily life doesn't and I would add, sometimes can't have a place for" (p. 235).

The postmodernists adopted John Dewey's ideas to support their concept of teaching freedom. They (Schutz, 2000) focused on Dewey's discussions about the interaction of the artist with his environment. Dewey (as cited in Schutz, 2000) felt that when making a work of art the artist's perceptions were formed by his/her unique experiences and those perceptions were in conflict with the pre-established lenses provided by one's learned cultural practices. He (Dewey, as cited in Schutz, 2000) also believed that aesthetic activity was always marginal to the larger structure of normalized society and that "those who have the gift of creative expression in unusually large measure disclose the meaning of individuality of others to those others" (p. 114). It is hoped that arts educators would be doing exactly that in their daily interactions with students. A better understanding of how creative individuals actually worked could be gained through research. This in turn has the potential to add to the ability of the teacher to instruct their students in art.

Understanding what the postmodernists believed was complicated by their constant maneuverings to avoid any concrete statements about their beliefs. The various concepts and attitudes that fell loosely under the heading of postmodern all seemed to hold out hope for freedom to flourish within our educational system. The complexity and conflict of approaches seemed to fade when we contemplated the attitude about teaching expressed in this statement by James Boyd White (Reinhardt, as cited in Schutz, 2000): "When we discover in this world no earth or rock to stand or walk upon but only shifting

sea and sky and wind, the mature response is not to lament the loss of fixity but to learn to sail" (p. 215).

**Multicultural Art Education**

Multicultural art education (MCAE) was an aspect of postmodernism that continues to have an influence on the way art is taught in our schools today. It rejected the formalist/modernist notion (Adejumo, 2002) that there was a universal way that art could be evaluated solely by its intrinsic qualities, without any knowledge of the culture or the individual producing the art. MCAE (Adejumo, 2002) also acknowledged the artistic contributions of non-Western cultures and sought to dissolve the demarcation between high and low art that was so clearly stated in the modernist tenet.

During the late 20th century (Smith, 1996), MCAE began as a response to the changing demographics in America. The United States was becoming more and more diversified as to race, religion and point of origin. Minorities were also becoming more and more restless about being included in the dialogue about what, and whose art would be taught about in the schools. However, there was no agreement on the form that multiculturalism in art education was to take (Smith, 1996).

Various forms of MCAE developed with each focusing on a particular aspect of art education that they felt had been dealt with incorrectly, or ignored during the modern era. Collins and Sandell (as cited in Smith, 1996) cited four political goals of MCAE they were, to attack and escape the dominant culture, to make restitution for the damage done by the dominant culture, and to transform it into a common culture; there were other goals for MCAE that emphasized social improvement and preferred psychological states. Many aspects of MCAE had positive implications for teaching, understanding and learning about a wide variety of artistic styles and ways of working. My concern was that the role of the teacher remained fluid in an effort to treat multiple cultures with respect and thoroughness, while at the same time not neglecting the importance of the individual student in the process of making the art products. Smith (1996) stated: "If art is not about each student's experience, what is it about" (p. 218)?

**MCAE and its Relationship to Community-Based Art Education (CBAE)**

In addition to an emphasis on cultural pluralism, MCAE also incorporated various aspects of Community-Based Art Education (CBAE) into its curriculum. CBAE programs (Ulbricht, 1988) promoted the inclusion of art on many different levels such as art that is bought, traded, fabricated, or discussed in the community where the students are taught. Arts educators (Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, & Wasson, 1992) felt that by including content from the local community in the curriculum that social and critical discussions could be promoted; they also believed this was an essential component of ME. Art education (Zimmerman, 1990) must be restructured in areas such as content, social context, and the ways in which the values of various cultures were presented so that our students can be better prepared members of a global society. One method of restructuring (Anderson, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990) was to shift the focus of learning from a total school environment to a community-involving environment. Art programs were utilized that took learning beyond the walls of the classroom and emphasized a social community-based context. One example (Blandy & Congdon, as cited in Zimmerman, 1990) involved creating seminars where university art education students developed art curricula that focused on the study of different groups in their community and explored new ways of teaching about the cultural and historical backgrounds of these various social groups.

Interacting with and experiencing real people in authentic cultural settings while promoting cultural diversity were important tenets of both CBAE as well as MCAE. For a MCAE program to be effective (Adejumo, 2002), it had to be interactive and provide for student participation in making and experiencing art activities within a particular culture. Preparation for such a program required teachers (Adejumo, personal communication, Nov. 19, 2002) "to go outside of their classrooms and participate in the visual and material culture of the community that they live in."

It was interesting to note that CBAE (McFee, as cited in Ulbricht, 1988) was once discussed as a potential "fifth domain" of DBAE. There appeared to be very little common ground between CBAE, with its decidedly postmodern thrust, and original

DBAE theory that was strictly modern in almost every sense. Over the years since its inception DBAE became more postmodern in its policies, therefore it was much easier to see a connection today than it would have been during the 1980s.

Even though MCAE went in and out of favor during the last 60 years since Viktor Lowenfeld sought to instill pride in his African-American students by teaching them about their artistic heritage, the goals have remained constant. Teaching art in a culturally pluralistic way so that students from minority and marginalized groups can achieve recognition and understanding remains a major concern of MCAE today. With the rapid increase of diversity within our student bodies, MCAE made the effort to represent as many groups as possible in the art curriculum through promotion of a broad range of minority cultures and marginalized groups. Among arts educators there was an awareness of the complexity involved in presenting art in authentic and relevant ways, as well as from various viewpoints so that all voices were heard in the educational dialogue. This was the exciting dynamic of MCAE - to always be cognizant of the goals and the difficulties inherent in achieving them, but to never waiver in our efforts to strive toward them. When asked if arts educators were continuing to embrace the postmodern paradigms of cultural diversity and pluralism, Dr. Adejumo (personal communication, Nov. 19, 2002) summed it up well, "I really don't foresee any retrogression in the pluralistic atmosphere that we have in the visual arts and in art education today."

Modernists characterized creativity as originating within and emanating from the individual working alone. The artist conceived and produced works of art based on personal motivation and need for expression. Postmodernists downplayed the potential for the individual to act creatively. Social and historical advancements were attributed to the co-operative efforts of the masses rather than to the creative individual. In the final analysis, artists were still producing works of art. No matter how creativity was characterized, creative processes utilized by visual artists provided a rich opportunity for the study of the inner-world of the creative individual.

**Needs or area that needs further investigation**

Art educators and scholars believed that we should revisit the concept of creativity and resume research in this area. They felt that creativity inquiry had been generally neglected since the frenzy of research that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s. Advocating for a reassessment of creativity research, Wilson (1971) suggested:

> We now seem to be riding out the tail of that groundswell, and it seems to me that during this time when researchers have turned away from inquiry into creativity, we might be able to reassess this area in a more reasoned manner than ever before possible by taking advantage of the synthesis that has taken place, but also by being able to do our reassessing free from the turmoil of the groundswell action. (p. 4)

Lewis (1971) agreed with Wilson that since the flurry of research conducted during the middle of the 20th century, researchers moved from creativity inquiry into other areas of interest, additionally she admitted "…the mystery of the creative process remains" (p.35). Lewis (1971) hoped that the phase which creativity research was presently experiencing was "incubation" (the stage in the creative process described by Wallas (1926) that occurred prior to illumination). I felt that more research was needed to push us forward from incubation into illumination. It may even be that there were no blinding illuminations about creativity to be discovered, rather it was hoped that some illumination in the areas of themes and insights into creativity could be uncovered. Medawar (1969) stated, "… that 'creativity is beyond analysis' is a romantic illusion that we must now outgrow" (p. 47).

Even though past research into creativity has been informative, I believed that there was still much to learn about the creative process and the creator. I also felt that careful attention had not been paid to the ways artist generate ideas, how they utilized intuition, and how they continued to remain motivated throughout the creative process. According to Howard Gardner (1993), many researchers reacted to psychometric testing for creativity by producing new types of research that they felt were more valid and comprehensive. During the middle of the 20th century, Guilford (Eisner & Ecker, 1966;

Gardner, 1993) measured creativity scientifically for the first time in the same way that intelligence was measured. After much research and debate (Gardner, 1993), the following three conclusions were reached: first: it was discovered that creativity was not the same as intelligence, second, creativity tests were reliable because a person who scores high on a particular creativity test will generally score high on a different creativity test, and third, use of a paper/pencil test was not demonstrated to be valid. The real blow to measuring creativity psychometrically (Gardner, 1993) came with the inability to demonstrate validity; no convincing evidence arose to support the belief that a high scoring individual was necessarily creative in his actual vocation or avocation.

In reacting to psychometric testing, researchers turned the approach around. Rather than trying to identify creative individuals from their reactions to specific questions, researchers sought accomplished individuals who already exhibited creative behaviors as their subjects for creativity inquiry. Researchers (Gardner, 1993) took a new cognitive approach whereby they looked for unambiguous instances of the creative process that were embodied in the behavior and thinking of productive artists, scientists and other creative individuals.

In several of his books, Howard Gardner (1983, 1993, & 1997) did much to heighten our awareness of the qualities and characteristics of highly creative individuals through using indirect research methods. Since his work involved the analysis of behaviors and traits of mainly deceased individuals, his work could not be characterized as direct research.

I believed that there was much to be garnered from observing and interviewing highly creative individuals in a direct manner over an extended period of time as they actively participated in their creative processes. Howard Gruber, of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Doris Wallace (2001) advocated for a type of creativity research that studied the creative process in a direct way using recognized creators at work. Gruber (2001) stated: "Despite the copious and burgeoning research literature about creativity, there is and has been singularly little direct study of how a creative

person actually does the work for which he or she is recognized" (p. 346). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) concurred:

> Psychologists have learned much about how healthy human beings think and feel from studying pathological cases. Brain-damaged patients, neurotics, and delinquents have provided contrasts against which normal functioning may better be understood. But we have learned little from the other end of the continuum, from people who are extraordinary in some positive sense. (p. 11)

Gruber (2001) termed his approach the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA). In the ESA (Gruber & Wallace, 2001), cognitive processes were emphasized, however, social affective, and aesthetic aspects were also taken into consideration. Gruber's work (Gardner, 1993) was characterized by focusing careful attention on the ways in which generative ideas, and sets of ideas evolved and deepened over significant periods of time; his team uncovered a number of principles that characterized the work of scientists such as Darwin and Piaget. Gruber (2001) interviewed Piaget personally about his creative process. To my knowledge Gruber's approach had not been used in the study of visual artists. This approach was also very different from the indirect approach used by Gardner and the psychologists conducting psychometric studies of creativity.

Gruber's ESA (2001) was unique in six ways. First, it was based on direct study and second, it required the researcher to understand the creator's work along with the domain under investigation. Third, it required ample data to reconstruct the actual course of events leading to the creative work, and fourth, it paid careful attention to how individual processes such as problem solving, imagery, and metaphor-making figured into the process as a whole. Fifth, it sought to avoid the temptation to develop a list of traits that can be measured which would supposedly explain creativity, and finally, it viewed each case, not as a static entity, but rather as a systematic evolution. The ESA was incorporated into the proposed study in an effort to examine multiple aspects of the creative process as they occurred simultaneously.

**The research problem**

The research problem was to learn about various themes that characterized the ways in which accomplished artists made art in a natural setting; and second, to begin to determine the manner in which these artists utilized intuition, motivation, and freedom in their work. My research was concerned with observing the active participation by the artist in the formation of his/her own creations and how that process unfolded in unique ways that brought meaning to the life of the artist and to those who experienced their work.

## Chapter II

### 2. Theoretical Framework

**2.1 Review of related literature**. The relationship of the research problem to its theoretical contexts should be established. Be specific in citing previous research that has direct bearing on your study.

**2.2 Purpose of the study**. The purpose of the planned investigation should be established. Indicate how answers to your research questions relate to what is already known as established by the literature review. What new evidence will your study provide?

The purpose of this section was to establish the relationship of the research problem to its theoretical context and to explain the purpose of my research. This section included four areas of discussion. They were, first, an introduction to the purpose of the study, second, the origins of theories concerning creativity, third, both past and current paradigms and approaches used in the study of creativity (including a discussion of specific studies that had a direct bearing on my research). Finally, the purpose of the study was outlined.

**Introduction to the purpose of this study**

The purpose of my research study was to establish the presence of a dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious aspects of the mind as utilized by visual artists in their work. The artists' ability to mesh these two mental functions allowed them to create truly unique images. Additionally, I was convinced that some elements within the unconscious were formed as a result of powerful sensory experiences.

With the sentiments expressed above the researcher began a study of the creative processes of four visual artists. The following comment was from one individual in the study who sought to describe the importance of a particular sensory experience to his work. Vincent Mariani had just finished a one-man show of his paintings in New York City. A reporter who was interviewing him for a magazine article asked him what had been the most important influence on his work. Mariani said:

> I lied to her. I told her about the artists that I admired - Kandinsky and Albers. What influenced me even more profoundly was an experience that happened when I was a little boy growing up in Cleveland. I remember living in a concrete apartment building. Concrete was everywhere. I loved to look out of my upstairs window so I could see the sunlight. There was a parchment shade that could be pulled down over my window … once when it was closed I realized there was the tiniest of pinholes up at the top of the shade. I was letting in a thin beam of light. I was drawn to this shaft of light … particles of dust passed through the beam and made the light magically tangible. It was wonderful! (emphasis his). I let it fall on my forehead, on the palms of my hands, opening my mouth I tried to drink it in. I didn't know why at the time, I said to myself, 'somehow this is important.' (Interview, March 9, 2000)

**Origins of theories concerning creativity**

In order to understand the nature and evolution of contemporary research in creativity it was essential to first examine its theoretical origins. Research in creativity did not have a long history, having begun just over a hundred years ago. The same could not be said of the theories concerning creativity. Scholars, scientists, educators, and philosophers had produced theories of creativity that dated as far back as the time of the Ancient Greeks. Throughout history, the writings of five individuals had informed the entire intellectual tradition of Western civilization they were Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Galton, and Freud. Their theories concerning creativity (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) have had a profound effect on subsequent explanations, descriptions, theories, and research on creativity. I briefly described their theories and assumptions about creativity, followed by a discussion of John Dewey's synthesis of their ideas in forming his unique theory of creativity.

**Plato**

The first theories developed concerning creativity came from the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. For Plato (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976), the main source for the creation of art was always controlled by something outside of the artist, the

Muse, or a divinity. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1978), "A Muse is a goddess inspiring learning and the arts" (p. 598). This definition clearly placed the Muse as an external contributor to the creative process. Plato (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) viewed creativity as being independent of natural or human origin and existing in a realm far removed from and influenced by reason; his writings focused on the role of inspiration and the supernatural in the creative process. In the following passage Plato came out strongly in favor of creativity being driven by a force other than reason. This statement, taken from Plato's dialogue entitled *The Ion* (1961), expressed his view of inspiration as it took hold of a poet. He stated: "And what they say is true, for a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him" (p. 218).

An integral part of Plato's theory of creativity was imitationalism. According to Plato (Eisner & Ecker, 1966), imitationalism defined the properties of a work of art as the features that imitated the world outside of art; these particular features comprised images of ideal forms that were far removed from true reality. For Plato (Arieti, 1976), ideas or concepts were the ultimate reality.

Plato's work (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) influenced the subsequent writings of two groups, the super-naturalists (non-naturalists) and those theorists who espoused alternative approaches to creativity that emphasized the mystery and inexplicability of the creative process. The super-naturalist perspective (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) argued for a source of creativity that was independent of natural resources, and asserted that rational explanations were inadequate to fully account for the creative process; they posited that the creator's knowledge, along with pre-established rules of procedure could not entirely explain his/her creative achievements.

In relationship to my study I felt that Plato's theory was too extreme because it was based on the concept that the source of creativity resided exclusively outside of the consciousness of the individual. Even though I respected and agreed with Plato in assigning the unconscious a place of prominence in the creative process, nevertheless his negation of the rational aspects of creation did not correspond to my experiences in either

making, or in teaching art. It was hard to imagine how he would have conducted research using his theory. Even the most powerful inspiration or encounter with Plato's Muse must have eventually entered the conscious mind of the creator so that some aspects of the experience could have been processed rationally in order for it to have been fabricated and made into an artistic object. By rationally, I did not necessarily mean a long or extended period of rational thought or concentration. Rather, after having painted for over 40 years, I still have found it necessary to utilize some periods of conscious thought, for example, in the preparation of my canvas in such a way that the paint would not immediately crack and fall off the surface. Even more to the point would have been the creation of a canvas that best reflected the shape and or size of the unconscious experience that I intended to convey. Plato (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) felt that the artist was "out of his mind" (p. 28) when creating. Nevertheless, in light of the artwork created by the ancient Greek artists in sculpture, it seemed quite obvious that rational intentions were at work in mastering and utilizing the tools and techniques used in fabricating sculptures both in marble, and those created through the process of bronze casting.

**Aristotle**

In direct opposition to Plato was Aristotle's theory of creativity. Aristotle (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) rejected any supernatural intervention, occurrence, or mystery in the creative process; for him, creativity was fully governed by natural laws. He believed that the creative process was the same as other natural human processes and that it could be adequately explained in terms of prior conditions. Additionally, Aristotle (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) posited that everything came from something else.

In *Metaphysics* (1928), Aristotle established his belief that art was a productive activity that was governed by the same natural laws that governed all matter; he referred to artworks as 'makings' that he viewed as a part of the overall natural process of human production, he stated:

> Now natural comings to be … come to be by nature; and that out of which they come to be is what we call matter … all things produced either by nature or by art have matter; for each of them is capable both of being and of not being … and both that from which they are produced is from nature, and the type according to which they are produced is nature … for man begets man. Thus, then are natural products produced; all other productions are called 'makings' … and all makings proceed either from art or from a faculty or from thought … from art proceed the things of which the form is in the soul of the artist. (By form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance). (pp. 791-795)

Art, according to Aristotle (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976), was the production of what was performed and imposed on matter; the resources that the artist began with were both necessary and sufficient to account for all of the characteristics found in the finished product. Aristotle (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) considered the imitative features that defined a work of art as its organic structure - for example - works of art resembled actual objects in that they both had a beginning, middle, and an end. For Aristotle, (Dewey, 1934) representation in art, with reference to expression, comprehensively covered all the values and qualities of any possible esthetic experience.

In an effort to understand how Aristotle accounted for all things being part of a natural process, it was essential to consider how he thought about change. It was interesting that Aristotle (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) acknowledged change in natural processes without acknowledging the difference between natural changes and changes involving human effort. He did not make a distinction between a change in nature, such as a limb falling out of a tree, and an artist changing a piece of marble into a sculpture. I believed these two events were fundamentally and inherently different. People made art by changing and manipulating matter, and even though nature also changed and manipulated matter, it did not however, create art.

Aristotle's philosophy, based on logic and rationality, had informed Western thought since its inception. More than a thousand years after Aristotle wrote *Metaphysics,* the strength of his ideas formed the basis for the rational and scientific

beliefs so cherished by the founders of The Enlightenment. The Modern Era, with its faith in rationality and human logic, had carried Aristotle's beliefs even into our own time.

It was clear that Aristotle's theory of creativity had stimulated the development of many of the ideas espoused by scholars and researchers who had naturalist or rationalist assumptions concerning creativity. Psychometric testing for creativity in the 1950s (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) emphasized a logical thrust in creativity inquiry; it was thought that if tests could be devised to identify creative characteristics and personality traits exhibited by the artist, this knowledge would logically lead the researchers to creative individuals. This did not always prove to be the case. Other researchers (Barron, 1961; Lark-Horovitz, Lewis, & Luca, 1967; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Lowenfeld, 1982) tried to equate intelligence (IQ) to creative ability, however IQ was determined to be a factor in creativity only to a certain point, above which it had no negligible effect. Nevertheless, everything the researchers thought they needed to know about creativity was, as Aristotle believed, to be found within the nature of the individual.

In reference to my research, Aristotle's ideas, like those of Plato, were also too extreme to form the sole theoretical basis for my study. For me, Aristotle's complete reliance on the individual as the single source of a work of art was a troubling concept. It did not resonate with my own experiences as an artist, art educator, or in what other artists had revealed about what they believed to be the sources of their ideas. My approach to the study of creativity combined Aristotle's ideas about art originating inside the person's consciousness, with Plato's view that artistic creativity originated entirely outside of the consciousness of the creator. The premise for my study was that both internal (within the conscious realm) and external (within the unconscious realm) factors contributed to the origination and promotion of the creative process.

**Kant**

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) developed a theory of creativity that placed the creator at the center of an original creative process. Kant (1951) felt that the creator was unique and even assigned to him/her the role of genius. In this passage, taken from *The*

*Critique of Judgment*, 1951, Kant stated, "Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may express the matter thus: Genius is the innate mental disposition (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art" (p. 150). In his theory talent was given a position of prominence. For Kant (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976), the artist/genius actually generated the rules of his/her own creative process; therefore any existing rules or laws were insufficient to explain his/her unique talent.

According to Kant (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976), the artist's work was produced independently of all prior procedures or rules; art was the result of but one single determining condition - the spontaneous activity that was made possible through the artist's consciousness. In order to clarify this spontaneous activity that occurred in the conscious mind of a creative individual, it was helpful to examine Kant's explanation of how we consciously understood experiences. Kant (1929) believed that we are predisposed to organize the world and objects into categories. "In Kantian philosophy the mind does not mirror the world; instead the world is organized or actually created by the mind" (Arieti, 1976, p. 288). Kant (1929) explained our understanding of the world as a faculty of the conscious mind; our experiences were not inherently organized in and of themselves, however we organized them; without our organizing and categorizing abilities we could not have recognized any experience because it would have lacked coherence.

If indeed artists were unique individuals, as Kant maintained, I surmised that there must have been something unique in the way they categorized their experiences. It was quite possible that the artist tried, but was unable to categorize certain experiences and this inability, or possibly frustration, may have served as a stimulant to the artist's imagination. Kant (1929) did not elaborate on this except to say that sensory and perceptual experiences were given initial unity through the artist's imagination. I took that a step further to say that the subjects in my study had acknowledged that sensory and perceptual experiences had served as generators of inspiration, as well as an impetus to continue working throughout the various stages of their creative processes.

Kant (1929) asserted that each artist had a unique process that did not follow prior or antecedent rules and was controlled only by the artist's spontaneous activity. For me, this was where the gap between theory and research seemed to be the widest. The natural rules that the mind normally followed in formulating and solving problems might have been different in the artistic process, as Kant suggested, however, extensive research was needed to determine if artists did or did not utilize unique processes, and how the processes worked. Additionally, artists might have even utilized a combination of old and new rules (which I believe they do); in which case, some traits of this newly synthesized process might have been shared by many talented persons, and even have been specific to the domain of the visual arts. My study examined the artist's logical thought processes as well as affective states that modified, halted, promoted, directed, or redirected their artistic processes.

Kant's theory of creativity was situated between those expressed by Plato and Aristotle. Kant was not considered a naturalist or rationalist, even though it seemed that he would have been, due to his belief that human activity controlled the creative process. The reason that he was not considered a rationalist may have been due, in part, to his view of the creative act as a unique leap in ordinary natural processes. This implied that something other than logical mental processing was present. Kant's theory varied considerably from Aristotle's rationalistic insistence on artistic creation as the product of natural antecedent conditions, not a spontaneous event.

Equally important to Kant's theory of self-contained creativity (1929) was his assertion that artists were unaware of the workings of their own minds; he did not believe that even the artist/genius could explain his/her own ideas or inspiration. He attributed artistic ideas as having been derived from guardian spirits known as "genii" that were given to man at birth. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* defined genius as, "a spirit, demon, tutelary deity, innate capacity, or a person as possessing this" (1978, p. 393). The genii seemed to play a similar role to that of Plato's Muse; the main difference being Kant's situating of the genii within the consciousness of the artist and Plato situating the Muse on the outside of consciousness. Plato's faith was in an external

source of creative inspiration, whereas Kant placed the source of creativity squarely inside of the creator.

Kant's theory of creativity (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) influenced the work of two groups of theorists: those who affirmed the human source of the creative process and those who insisted on a "self-generating" principle of creativity that was basically unexplained.

**Galton**

Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) was an eminent British, biologist, statistician, and meteorologist (Morris, 1971). "Modern scientific approaches to creative thinking, or "genius," are traditionally held to begin with the genetic studies of Galton (1892) and the psychopathological investigations of Lombroso (1891)" (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976, p. 273). Prior to his genetic studies, Galton (1869) attempted to extend Darwin's theory of evolution to the transmission of human faculties. In his book *Hereditary Genius*, Galton (1870), reached two conclusions, first, great men made culture rather than the opposite anthropological approach that accepted great men as being products of their culture; and second, that greatness was a hereditary characteristic. He was one of the first scholarly individuals to participate in this debate.

Like Kant, Galton ascribed creativity to the occurrence of genius, however, unlike Kant, he believed genius to be genetic and therefore inherited. Galton (Feldman, 1986) belonged to a prominent family; he was the first cousin of Charles Darwin and the grandson of a distinguished physician. The earliest work (Feldman, 1986) attempting to document the relationship between eminence and family membership was conducted by Galton; his research revealed that in England great men tended to come from the same families repeatedly generation after generation. From this research he concluded that the capacity for giftedness was primarily inherited. Some felt his conclusions (Feldman, 1986) were unjustified; nevertheless, hereditary genius is still a powerful theory today and has continued to influence creativity research. Geschwind conducted some intriguing research that followed in the same vein. Geschwind (Feldman, 1986) proposed that extraordinary talent may be found more frequently in children with atypical patterns of

hormonal and immunological development, which may in turn represent familial characteristics.

Galton was a proponent of the presence of mental imagery in creative people and he conducted research to identify those individuals who had extraordinary abilities in visualizing images. In a study conducted in 1880, entitled "Illumination, Definition and Colouring (his spelling) of Mental Images," Galton (Rugg, 1963) found that a great majority of the men of science whom he interviewed protested that mental imagery was unknown to them. The scientists in his study also believed it was strange to suppose that the words 'mental imagery' really meant what Galton believed everyone else supposed them to mean. His research also revealed that large numbers of individuals who were not scientists habitually saw vivid mental images and they were in full color.

In the early twentieth century other researchers followed Galton's pioneering efforts in the study of imagery in creative people. In 1907, Jaensch at the University of Marburg (1930) introduced the concept of "eidetic" imagery; the word "eidetic" came from the Greek noun of the verb "to see." According to Jaensch (1930), the eidetic image possessed the quality of "out-there-ness" and an almost three-dimensional stereoscopic aspect. Jaensch gave a clear description of eidetic images that evolved from his research (as cited in Rugg, 1963):

> The images appeared as though "projected" upon a gray background placed at normal reading distance, and they possessed a richness in detail greater than either visual afterimage or memory image commonly shows. Thus a child is shown a picture of a garden scene for ten seconds, and some hours later is able to *see* the scene, reading off from his memory panorama more and more details which he never noticed in the original during the period of exposure. Such images may be poured forth in a volume that is immense in comparison with what can be produced by the ordinary methods of remembering and verbalizing. They also obey optical laws too complex for the child to understand, indicating an orderly perceptual process which is continued in full force long after the removal of the outer stimulus. (p. 72)

Nineteenth century psychologists were indisputably interested in the role played by imagery in the creative individual. Nevertheless, the positivistic climate in philosophy during the first half of the twentieth century, along with the mechanistic influence of Pavlov and Thorndike (Rugg, 1963), curtailed academic concerns about imagery and other constituents of imagination.

Galton's theory of genetically inherited genius (Rothenberg & Housman, 1976) had a powerful impact on modern investigators seeking mechanisms that fully accounted for creativity. Galton (1869) carried on the naturalistic tradition of Aristotle by theorizing that the mechanism of heredity was the cause of creativity. Galton's research on the mechanistic origins of creativity influenced other researchers such as Cattell, Terman, Cox, Skinner, Crovitz, and Greenacre. More recently, the importance of biological inheritance had been brought to the forefront by on-going research and the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Gardner.

**Freud**

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was noted for a variety of contributions to creativity theory. Gardner stated, "Like other revolutionary figures, Freud helped frame the terms within which the personality and motivation of creative individuals have subsequently been described" (1993, p. 25). Freud's most important theoretical contribution to creativity was his emphasis on non-conscious human factors in the creative process. A naturalist and rationalist by orientation, he (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) searched for prior factors within the artist to explain the creative process; however he freely admitted that it was possible that they may not have been able to fully explain the phenomenon of creativity.

Freud clearly delineated the general psychological laws concerning fantasy and its relationship to creativity. In an effort to support the naturalistic approach to creativity Freud (1908) noted that dynamic factors within the human psyche were necessary pre-conditions for the creation of a work of art - among those dynamic factors was fantasy. For the first time, Freud (1908), explained in detail, a connection between the work of the creative artist and a generally occurring distinctively psychological process known as

fantasy. The importance Freud assigned to fantasy within the creative process was clearly expressed in the following quotation. Freud (1908) said, "Before a child is pulled from a daydream (by a teacher) the teacher should consider whether the subject matter that the child is escaping is as rich or necessary to the child as the content of the fantasy is likely to be" (p. 143).

According to Melrose (1989), Freud was the first scholar to develop a dynamic theory of the creative personality that acknowledged the unconscious functioning of the mind. Additionally, authors Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner, (1994) posited:

> It has been known for centuries that human beings have images and experiences that seem to come not from the outside but from the inside world. These have been associated with creativity … dreams, daydreams, fantasies, free associations, and the like are also likely to be unique human capabilities, or uniquely formed within the human nervous system. The "ideal" images of the Greeks, the gods and goddesses, demons, devils, … all seem likely candidates to have originated in unconscious processes. (p. 33)

Plato had no conception of the "unconscious" - so for him anything beyond human awareness was truly "outside" the individual and thus "supernatural" or external to the creator of the work of art. For Freud, the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind were both parts of the same mind, even if some areas were hidden at times from our conscious awareness. Freud situated the source of creativity within the human mind. Unlike Kant, who believed the artist/genius could not have known the source of his/her own genius; Freud did not seal the door to the unconscious.

Plato's Muse later became Freud's "unconscious." Unlike Plato, Freud was a scientist and considered himself a rationalist and a naturalist. For Freud, the unconscious was an integral part of the mind, albeit a mysterious and often times hidden part that nevertheless resided inside the individual. Freud, Jung, and other psycho-analysts (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) had studied the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious processes in general; additionally, Kris, Kubie,

Rothenberg, Arieti, and Gedo had theorized about the relationship between conscious and unconscious processes, specifically with regard to creativity.

Freud (1908) felt that indeed there was communication between the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind during the creative process. Others followed Freud, both Jung and Barron (Melrose, 1989) proposed that the creative person has the ability to bring chaotic unconscious material into the conscious area of the mind and make it useful in creating artistic products. Other scholars (Havelka, 1968, & Arieti, as cited in Melrose, 1989) posited that the creative individual has freer access to the primary (unconscious/pre-conscious) mental processes than did non-creative people.

I felt that the interplay between conscious and unconscious mental processes was an area of research that had not been fully explored with relationship to the creative process within the visual arts. It was mainly in the last decade that scholars researching creativity (Gruber & Wallace, 2001) began to consider the ramifications of both conscious as well as unconscious processes in their research. There were those who felt that because a mental process was unconscious that it was also unknowable. I did not agree. A particular mental activity or image may have been unconscious at one point in the creative process however this did not mean that it necessarily would remain so indefinitely. Even though many theorists had speculated about the reciprocal influences of conscious and unconscious processes, there still remained much to be learned about how the two areas worked together, or in opposition to one another. Others agreed - authors Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner (1994) stated:

> Our concern is with *how* the unique ways of forming and reforming ideas and images in different parts of the mind combine to make new thoughts possible … what we wish to emphasize here is that any attempt to describe creativity must include explicit reference to the unconscious processes that are so clearly a part of human experience. (p. 34)

Those influenced by Freud, such as Lombroso, Jung, Rank, Kris, and Kubie, (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) had espoused alternative approaches to creativity in which they speculated on the relationship between psychopathology (madness) and

creativity. Also, Arieti (Melrose, 1989) believed that the creative person and the schizophrenic individual had a great deal in common - both had freer access to the unconscious than other persons. Found within the unconscious were primary processes that were implicit, intuitive, irrational, instinctive, and chaotic; the creative person, quite unlike the person with schizophrenia, was not forever trapped within the unconscious and was able to return. At that point, the artist (Melrose, 1989) was able to mix together information garnered from the unconscious with information contained in the conscious mind; the artists' "ego strength" was the determining factor possessed by creative individuals that allowed them to return from the chaos of the unconscious.

Freud's concept of the unconscious had a profound effect on the fields of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, philosophy, and psychology, as well as education. Early in the 20th century, Margaret Naumburg, a student of John Dewey and Maria Montessori, and the mother of art therapy, expressed her belief in the potential of the unconscious to benefit the child through art (as cited in Smith, 1996):

> These early artistic enterprises serve to bring into conscious life the buried material of the child's emotional problems. Gradually his energies are transformed from unconscious ego-centric attachments, to the wider intercourses of social life. This, indeed, is the function of all art; self-expression in forms that are of social and communicable value. (p. 100)

**Dewey**

John Dewey (1934), the eminent educational philosopher of the 20th century, who lived between 1859 and 1952, synthesized many of the key beliefs of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Galton, and Freud in his book entitled *Art As Experience*. Dewey (Eisner & Ecker, 1966) was influenced by the writings of Darwin, James, and Galton; all viewed man's nature as having a biological basis. According to Dewey (1934), people lived in and through their environment and when the environment did not meet their needs, they needed to either control or adjust to it; in order for this to be accomplished they must behave intelligently. Dewey (1934) was especially interested in the tie between the intellect and sensory perception in the creative process. He greatly admired Plato and the

Ancient Greeks because they kept the connection (which he felt was important) between art and its relationship to society and Nature - not just an intellectual (conscious) connection, but also an intuitive and sensory connection. Dewey and Kant both acknowledged that sensory and perceptual experiences play important roles in the creative process of the artist. Like Freud, Dewey saw a free connection between conscious and unconscious mental activity in creative individuals. Dewey (1934) said, "There are no intrinsic psychological divisions between the intellectual and the sensory aspects; the emotional and ideational; the imaginative and the practical phases of human nature" (p. 247).

**Sensory Experiences and Conscious/Unconscious Processes**

My research was guided by the conviction that both conscious and unconscious processes were necessary and dependent on one another throughout the creation of a work of art, and that an essential part of our unconscious processes were tied to sensory experiences. Others (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) concurred:

> What is formed in the unconscious has to be in part constructed from material taken from representations based on sense experience. It also must become organized into images, events, objects, and processes. Otherwise, the unconscious forms would never include people and events from the real world, nor would familiar places appear in dreams. (p. 33)

Dewey (1934) brought a similar sentiment to light in *Art as Experience*. Until quite recently, researchers in creativity have paid little heed to Dewey's admonishments against separating the sensory from the intellectual aspects of knowing. Dewey borrowed the following quote from Keats to express his belief in the presence of, and the need for an acknowledgement of the dualism of the material and the spiritual within the life of the artist. Keats (as cited in Dewey, 1943) stated, "…the artist may look upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and the Earth and its contents as material to form greater things, that is [etherial] {Dewey's spelling} things" (p. 20).

One cannot help but feel that Dewey saw something unique in the artist's experience and the importance of sensory impressions because he took the time to pen an

entire book on the subject. Dewey (1934) lamented the place of the artist in the world brought on by a general and powerful push to sever our human instincts from our highly coveted human intellect. Additionally, Dewey (1934) felt that three truly harmful attitudes had been allowed to prevail: first, was the regarding of attempts to connect the higher and ideal things of experience with their basic vital roots as a betrayal of the value and nature of the higher and ideal things. The second, was the general attitude of revulsion brought about when fine art was connected with daily life, and finally, the attitude that carried much sway was that life itself was thought of as an affair of low appetite, or at best a thing of gross sensation. He (1934) asserted that these attitudes had been promoted through a long history of morality that held the body in contempt, feared the senses, and was in opposition to the flesh.

According to Dewey (1934), strong support for the separation of mind and body had infected our institutions. Institutions were, in reality (Dewey, 1943), disorganized, but they covered up their disorganization under the disguise of "static separation" – compartmentalizing every aspect of our institutions. Dewey noted (1934) that huge and abnormal separations had occurred - such as between practice and insight, between significant purpose and work, and between emotion and thought and doing. He was able to see and eloquently expressed how powerful institutions mimicked the attitudes and beliefs of the society as a whole.

Mankind (Dewey, 1934) had not been encouraged to use the senses to unite or enlarge life's experiences in lieu of a strong emphasis being placed on reason. Due to the exalted position of reason, we (Dewey, 1934) saw without feeling – our senses were only used to arouse passion, but not to fulfill the interests of insight; additionally, we had forced our senses to become superficial by rewarding the use of mind without participation of the body.

Interestingly enough, Dewey (1934) acknowledged that the moralist understood the natural relationship of mind and body even as they condemned anything sensuous as lewd. However, Dewey (1934) felt that professional psychologists and philosophers who were obsessed with problems relating to "knowledge" treated sensations as "elements of

knowledge" - the eye, for them, became merely an imperfect organ designed for collecting knowledge about objects.

It appeared that Dewey understood the creative process as being both a physical, sensory, unconscious experience, as well as, an intellectual and rational one. Dewey (1934) described an artistic experience as "an interaction of the organism with the environment that has been carried to its fullest by the transforming of this interaction into participation and communication" (p. 20). He seemed to be describing the "inspired" moment when the artist must see or feel deeply in order to be consciously motivated to make the art object that ultimately communicated the very personal and inspired experience to the rest of the world.

Dewey (1934) emphasized the importance of continuity in our life's experiences; the artist did more than see or recognize relationships between past and present experiences, he/she perceived importance in these relationships; the past was carried into the present to expand the present for the artist. Moments and places (Dewey, 1934) were charged with the accumulation of energy gathered over time. Dewey (1934) felt that man was unique in his ability to realize these relationships; art then became the result of man using materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life. For Dewey (1934), art was proof that man could consciously restore a union of senses, needs, impulses, and actions - thus creating a bridge between the spiritual and the material. According to Arieti, Freud, and Havelka (as cited in Melrose, 1989), artists carried these sensual emotional charges in their preconscious until the moment when a suitable trigger inspired or prompted the artist into action.

**Aesthetic Experience**

Dewey (1934) touched on the idea of a truly "etherial" (his spelling) experience as having originated in a sensory experience. Dewey (1934) related a story by H. W. Hudson where he was observing a grove of trees overhead in which he revealed that he felt like the trees were "aware of my presence like a supernatural being" (p. 28). Dewey (1934) believed that Hudson was undergoing "ecstatic communion" (p. 28), which was the mystical aspect of acute aesthetic surrender. I think that Hudson developed a deep

empathy with the trees that allowed him to experience nature on a profound and emotionally powerful level that had originated in a sensual moment of lying on the ground and looking up at the acacia trees. In his book entitled *I and Thou* (1958), Martin Buber also described this experience:

> This is the eternal source of art: a man is faced by a form which desires to be made through him into a work. This form is no offspring of his soul, but is an appearance which steps up to it [man's soul] and demands of it the effective power. The man is concerned with an act of his being. If he carries it through, if he speaks the primary words out of his being to the form which appears, then the effective power streams out, and the work arises. (pp. 9-10)

**Separation of Mind and Body**

What did all this mean for my study of creativity? I believed that one of the key benefits garnered from reading Dewey's reflections on the artistic experience was a heightened awareness of the prevailing attitudes concerning the separation of mind and body that had changed little since the time of his writing. He clearly delineated the attitudes of many people about the senses and how they should have been relegated to a secondary position, behind intellect, as an acceptable source used in making meaning of our life's experiences. Once again, I have been reminded of the strong emphasis being placed on logic and reasoning over insight, intuition, and sensory perception. The discrepancy caused by the over-development of the cognitive faculties and the under-development of the intuitive faculties has created an imbalance in the psyche of the modern individual. In a statement made at the close of the 19th century, Paul Gauguin, a post-impressionist painter (Chipp, 1968) expanded on this idea:

> I am a savage, and the civilized foresee it, for there is nothing surprising or confusing in my work except the savage-in-spite-of-myself. Art has just gone through a long period of aberration caused by physics, chemistry, mechanics, and the study of nature. Artists have lost all of their savagery, having no more instincts, they went astray on every path looking for productive elements which they did not have enough strength to create. (p. 85)

It was important for me as a researcher, to be always mindful that making art was a discipline that utilized reason, however, it was not a purely intellectual pursuit (if there was such a thing). Art had its roots in our needs, longings, and unique histories. The objects that we created grew from a desire to fulfill what nature had left void in our lives and what intellect, in all its vastness, could not fully encompass.

## Research Studies

Unlike theories concerning creativity that began to appear as early as the 5th century BC in Ancient Greece, creativity research had its scholarly beginnings only recently during the early years of the 20th century. Just as there were multiple theories that had been generated about the source and nature of creativity, there were also numerous approaches that had been used to study creativity as well. I will discuss several approaches that had been utilized in research on creativity, along with specific studies that had a direct bearing on my research.

## The Creative Process - Helmholtz

Scholars of scientific creativity were the first to describe the various phases that led to the creative act; later on, the stages they identified were used to describe the artistic creative process. In 1896, the physiologist Helmholtz (Arieti, 1976) became the first person to divide the creative process into phases and analyze each stage. From self-observation, Helmholtz (as cited in Arieti, 1976), noted three stages in his creative work: " 1) an initial investigation carried on until it is impossible to go further, 2) a period of rest and recovery, and 3) the occurrence of a sudden and unexpected solution" (p. 268).

## Poincaire'

The mathematician Henri Poincaire' (1913) gave one of the most thorough descriptions of the scientific creative process in his classic account of the discovery of Fuchsian groups and functions that made him famous. Poincare' (1913) added a fourth stage to the three previously proposed by Helmholtz. In an effort to validate the original insight described by Helmholtz, Poincare' (1913) included a second period of conscious effort following illumination. Poincare' (1913) put forth the idea that important mental connections, or combinations that lead to the acquisition of new knowledge, discovery, or

illumination occurred in the unconscious or "subliminal self" and he hypothesized that the unconscious self is in no way inferior to the conscious self. Even though Poincare' expressed this view almost a century ago, the role played by unconscious mental processes within the creative process remained woefully under-researched.

**Wallas**

In 1926, Joseph Wallas put forth a theory of the creative process that has been applied to every field of creativity. Wallas' theory (Arieti, 1976) included four stages; they were preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. All of the stages, except incubation (Lewis, 1971; Arieti, 1976), were conscious and intentional. It was during the preparation stage (Wallas, 1926) that all the preliminary work was done; the creator collected, searched, listened to suggestions, let his mind wander, and eventually relevant ideas were brought together and examined.

The second stage of Wallas' creative process was incubation. Authors, Lewis (1971) and Arieti (1976) concurred that during incubation, the mind continued to organize and elaborate on accumulated material, even though the creator had little or no consciousness of its workings. The physicist Freeman Dyson (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) reflected on the nature of incubation in his creative process:

> I am fooling around not doing anything, which probably means that this is a creative period, although of course you don't know until afterward. I think that it is very important to be idle. I mean, they always say that Shakespeare was idle between plays. I am not comparing myself to Shakespeare, but people who keep themselves busy all of the time are generally not creative. So I am not ashamed of being idle. (pp. 98-99)

Illumination was the third stage of the creative process described by Wallas (1926). It occurred when the pre-conscious finished its work and as Lewis (1971) stated, "It notifies the conscious of its success" (p. 33). The creator (Arieti, 1976; Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) saw the solution to the problem that can be realized in an instance as a clear insight, intuition, or solution, or it can be the result of a successful series of associations that have lasted for quite some time. In Bahle's study of musical inspiration

(as cited in Patrick, 1937) he found that one composer viewed inspiration as, "a sudden idea … characterized by the appearance of a clear structure with a consciousness of unfamiliarity … its capacity for expansion, and its vitality, freshness, and originality" (p. 35-36).

The final stage of Wallas' creative process (1926) was verification; he placed verification within the providence of the conscious mind. Poincare' (as cited in Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) expounded on verification:

> It never happens that unconscious work supplies ready-made the result of a lengthy calculation in which we have only to apply fixed rules … All that we can hope from these inspirations, which are the fruits of unconscious work, is to obtain points of departure for such calculations. As for the calculations themselves, they must be made in the second period of conscious work which follows the inspiration, and in which the results of the inspiration are verified and the consequences deduced. (p. 70)

Wallas (Lark-Horovitz, Lewis, & Luca, 1967; Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) developed his four-stage theory from introspection and scattered observations about his personal accounts of the creative process, not by conducting a systematic empirical study. His theory was proposed in 1926; nevertheless nine years would pass before it would be tested in an academically rigorous manner. Patrick was the first researcher to conduct experiments that sought to prove or disprove Wallas' theory. She was able to confirm the existence of the four stages of the creative process described by Wallas through her studies of poets, artists, and scientists (1935, 1937, & 1938) respectively.

**Patrick's Study - 1937**

Patrick (1937) stated that her research problem, "is to study the process of creative thought in sketching pictures" (p. 35). Patrick (1937) referred to her previous study conducted with poets where she had observed four stages of creative thought: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification or revision; she wanted to see if there was evidence of these four stages in the creative processes of visual artists.

The literature review in her study was very brief, but according to Rothenberg and Hausman (1976), "her work represented a landmark attempt to carry out psychological experiments on creativity" (p. 73). Assuming this was true, there may have been a dearth of prior research literature to which she could refer. Nonetheless, Patrick mentioned (1937) Galli and Bahle's creativity studies that dealt with the nature of inspiration, and she noted the theories developed by Wallas and Poincare' that identified the four stages of creative thought which she had identified when examining the poets in her original study.

Certainly, one of the strongest aspects of Patrick's study (1937) was a minutely detailed description of her procedures. They were so thoroughly explained that anyone attempting to replicate the study would have a clear understanding of exactly how to proceed. Patrick (1937) selected 100 participants; 50 in the "experimental group" were artists of ability, and 50 in the "control group" were non-artists. The groups (Patrick, 1937) contained a mixture from various locales in the United States, they were matched almost evenly on a vocabulary/intelligence test, they were almost evenly divided M/F, they equated closely in age, and they were all white.

The participants in Patrick's study (1937) were given a poem and asked to draw a picture about it, or whatever it suggested to them; they were also asked to say anything that came into their mind out loud, no matter how irrelevant it seemed. Next, (Patrick, 1937) everything the subject said and drew was recorded in shorthand; there was no time limit. According to Patrick (1937), " the experimenter noted every line that was sketched and the order in which the objects were formed" (p. 40). Without the aid of a video recorder or movie camera, I found it hard to believe that every single line could have been accurately described and recorded in shorthand.

Patrick (1937) statistically analyzed her findings on the four phases of the creative process and put the data into easily readable tables. She (1937) divided the time spent for each artist to complete his/her drawing into equal quarters. Next, she (1937) began to examine what occurred during each quarter; for example, she identified the first stage of preparation as the one that included the most thought changes (any modification of thought sufficient to form a new sentence). By analyzing her data, she (1937) found that

three-fourths of the thought changes for both groups occurred in the first quarter; likewise, she analyzed the other three stages in the same manner. The four phases identified by Patrick in the creative processes of the poets (1937) also occurred in both the artist and non-artist groups.

Statistical tables were created in which Patrick (1937) compared artists to non-artists on a variety of other factors such as: speed of composition, manner of handling materials, techniques of art, topics sketched, and merit of the pictures created as judged by experts. Her study (1937) concluded with an essay/discussion of the four phases of the creative process, the artists' answers to the interview questions, and a comparison between artists and poets.

Patrick's study was rooted strongly in an experimental/causal-comparative/quantitative format with almost no qualitative elements. The causal-comparative aspect was seen in her abundance of tables comparing the experimental and control groups on numerous factors. It was quantitative because she assigned numbers to almost every type of thought and behavior, and it was experimental because she divided her subjects into two groups, one a control group, and the other an experimental group, both underwent a rigidly controlled drawing test. There was a qualitative aspect to her study in that she did ask her subjects to describe their accounts of incubation. From these accounts Patrick (1937) was able to describe incubation, "a mood or idea is being incubated when it involuntarily repeats itself with more or less modifications during a period when the subject is also thinking of other topics" (p. 53). Patrick attempted to integrate a small measure of qualitative data and analysis into an otherwise largely quantitative study.

The heavy emphasis throughout Patrick's study on the quantitative approach seemed understandable given the historical context and scientific atmosphere in which her research was conducted. Patrick was a psychologist. In 1937, psychology was in its infancy. Every effort was being made to establish psychology as a viable field of scientific inquiry. The more closely psychological research studies mimicked scientific

experiments the greater the chance that the field of psychology would be accepted as a rigorous academic discipline.

**Critique of Patrick's Study**

Even though Patrick's efforts to confirm the stages of the creative process identified by Wallas should be respected, there were four areas of her study that I found to be quite troubling. First, she presented the artists with a pre-selected stimulus from which to make their drawings. Second, she asked the artists to talk while working on their drawings. Third, was her lack of follow-through on the incubation phase of the study, and fourth, was her failure to relate incubation to the other phases of the artistic process.

In Patrick's study (1937), the artists were asked to make a drawing after reading a selection from Milton's "L'Allegro." This was contradictory to everything I knew about the way artists work. One of the most crucial elements of the creative process was selecting what subject matter will be utilized; it informed all future thoughts and actions. Patrick negated the possibility of observing this important aspect of the creative process because she had already made the selection for the artist. I believed that her decision to restrict the artists' choice in this early phase of the creative process unduly affected, and potentially invalidated, the later choices that the artists were allowed to make on their own.

The second aspect that I found troubling was her request that the artists give a continuous verbal account of their thoughts at the same time that they were working. This was a type of analysis that I had used on myself in my own studio in a very similar fashion. I have tried to relay my ideas to a tape recorder, and also wrote down my thoughts while I was in the process of painting. I found it to be horribly distracting. So much energy was spent trying to accurately recount what was going on in my head that I could not achieve a continuous train of thought in my work. Eventually, this type of inquiry was abandoned for a less invasive method of observation. I began using a video camera with audio capabilities to tape myself while working. This approach, not available to Patrick in 1937, proved more successful because I was able to work without

distractions, and was able to recall aspects of my mental state as I watched the tape in retrospect.

The third problem I had was with her inconclusive handling of the creative phase known as incubation. Even though several of her subjects gave compelling accounts of incubation in response to a questionnaire, no follow-up questions were indicated. In her study (1937), three artists revealed their experiences with incubation:

> I almost always carry an idea around a while in my mind before I start to work. It keeps coming back several times while I am doing other things, and I can work it out later. Sometimes I lose it if I don't work on it. In coming back it changes, and sometimes improves as it comes back. If I don't grab it I may get something different. (p. 52)
>
> I usually carry an idea around in my mind. I see the picture completely in my mind before I paint. (p. 53)
>
> I noticed a tree and did not think about it and before I knew it, I had all sorts of information for making it. (p. 53)

Patrick stopped her inquiry at a crucial point. It appeared that much knowledge and insight into the creative process could have been garnered from further discussion of the artists' accounts of incubation. Many questions were left unasked and unanswered. From this study we were unable to learn anything about a specific instance of incubation and how it helped to promote the process of the actual fabrication of a particular work of art. She did not inquire as to whether incubation occurred in all her subjects every time they made a work of art. She did not establish if incubation occurred more than once while the work was under completion. No inquiry was made as to the origin of the ideas that continued to reappear during incubation.

Finally, and possibly the most disturbing aspect of Patrick's research, was her failure to integrate the conscious activities she discovered in preparation, illumination, and verification with the unconscious activities she noted in the incubation phase. My research focused on the relationship between conscious and unconscious processes in art production, therefore the period of incubation, along with its relationship to the conscious

phases of creativity were aspects of the creative process that I found most intriguing, as well as the most inadequately researched.

**The Modern Era (1950-1970)**

J. P. Guilford's presidential address before the American Psychological Association in 1950 was considered the beginning of the field of creativity research in the modern era (Guilford, 1950). During the 20 years that followed (Guilford, 1970), the vast majority of research studies on creativity were framed by the paradigm presented by Guilford in this speech. Only during the last 25 years has the research community made a serious effort to replace Guilford's conceptual basis for research (Amabile, 1983, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a, b, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986; Feldman, 1974, 1980, 1982; Gruber, 1981a, b; Simonton, 1988; Wallach, 1971, 1985; as cited in Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi & Gardner, 1994):

> …there is still a steady stream of research activity using Guilford's framework; it is fair to say that as of this date, no rival paradigm has dislodged it despite widespread dissatisfaction and a growing sense of its limitations. (p. 4)

**Guilford**

Guilford's main idea for creativity research (Amabile, 1983, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a, b; Feldman, 1974, 1980; Gruber, 1982; Guilford, 1950) was to better predict and thus offer an improved chance of identifying and encouraging talent in areas of national interest. In carrying out this mission he (Guilford, 1950) sought to isolate various intellectual and personality traits that might be possessed in greater quantity by creative people than by non-creative people. Three of the intellectual traits that he (Guilford, 1950) believed all creative people possessed are flexibility, fluency, and elaboration. One of the personality traits identified by Guilford (1957) was that creative people were possibly more sensitive to their environment.

In order to determine which traits were characteristic of creativity Guilford (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) proposed devising tests for the various qualities believed to be important; these tests were given to individuals with varying degrees of creativity. He believed (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) that if

a co-variation occurred, it would indicate that the traits tested were indeed able to differentiate creative individuals from those possessing less creativity.

Guilford (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) was not alone in his pursuit of characteristics that could identify the creative personality. MacKinnon and Barron (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994), along with their associates, conducted tests to identify traits possessed by creative people that would differentiate them from those who were deemed less creative. They (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) assembled a team of experts from various fields, such as architects and mathematicians, who were then rated by another team of experts according to their demonstrated creative accomplishments. As a result of this series of rankings (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994), "a set of personality indicators was found that occurred more frequently or with greater strength in the individuals rated as more innovative by their superiors" (p. 6).

**MacKinnon (Characteristics Lists)**

In the quest for identification of personality traits possessed by creative individuals, MacKinnon (Lark-Horovitz, Luca, & Lewis, 1967) found that creative people were discerning, curious, receptive, reflective, eager for experience, made fine distinctions, sought deeper meanings, withheld judgment, and were able to tolerate seeming disorder. Interestingly, MacKinnon (Lark-Horovitz, Luca, & Lewis, 1967) also discovered that creative individuals had considerable amounts of psychic turbulence of which they were aware, and with which they were able to live.

**Drawbacks to the Characteristics Lists**

The "characteristics lists" generated by MacKinnon and other researchers during this time period were troubling because the traits that they identified were overly general in conception. I did not dispute that the characteristics that were uncovered could, and oftentimes did apply to creative individuals, however they could just as easily refer to intellectual people who were not creative at all, and many traits could be applied to people with low IQ, as well they should be. Is there anyone among us who has not known a person with Downs' Syndrome who was not eager for experience and lacked

curiosity? During my senior year in high school (1969-1970), I spent one afternoon a week as a volunteer with children who were severely handicapped either mentally, emotionally, and/or physically (many without arms or legs). When I arrived in their classroom they were all over me; they were extremely curious about everything - my clothing, my name, my "bright red hair" - what we were going to do that day. The characteristics identified by these researchers are not specific to creativity, and certainly not particular to creativity in the visual arts. Additionally, follow-up research was not conducted to see how, or even if, these traits were utilized in making the lives of the individuals possessing them more creative.

In the race to win the Cold War, it was clear that the main focus, and possibly the only focus of the "traits research" carried out by Guilford and his colleagues, was on predicting and promoting creativity in math and science. It was not on fostering the creative processes of painters, sculptors, or those individuals involved in the visual arts.

**Creativity Research in Transition (1950 - 1970)**

Research in creativity conducted between 1950 and 1970 was disappointing. Nevertheless, there were three accomplishments that should not be forgotten. The first accomplishment (Barron, 1961; Wallach, 1971, 1985; Lowenfeld, 1982) was that IQ was largely unrelated to divergent thinking. The second (Gardner, 1988) was that creative individuals did seem to possess certain personality traits not shared by their less creative counterparts; and third (Barron, 1988), it had been found that with training and practice certain types of divergent thinking skills could be improved.

Especially noteworthy were the two things that did not happen during the period between 1950 and 1970 when large amounts of national resources were allocated for research in creativity. There was no accumulation of knowledge (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) about how novel ideas were actually constructed, and even more remarkably, the creative process itself was not examined.

**Wallach - Process Research**

In 1971, Michael Wallach advocated a shift from the Guilford paradigm of identifying traits associated with creative individuals, to a more focused study of the

creative process within specific fields of study. It was important to note that research conducted during the 1950s had involved intensive studies of selected architects, mathematicians, and other groups however it was not done in an effort to understand what was unique in each field, but to illuminate the qualities of creative persons in general. Wallach (1971) stated:

> if we want to learn about the enhancement of creativity, we had better consider training arrangements that make a person more competent at creative attainments themselves - such as writing novels well, excellence in acting, skill as a musician, or quality of art work produced. In like manner we have seen that learning about what co-varies with creative differences requires us to consider correlates of creative attainments themselves. (p. 23)

**Cognitive Revolution (1970s)**

During the1970s, researchers in the field of creativity (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) ventured in a new direction due in part to the influence of the cognitive revolution. It became apparent that IQ tests, as well as tests for creativity (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994), were not able to predict the creative accomplishments of individuals in a real world setting; "prediction," which had been the guiding force in the Guilford paradigm, shifted toward a host of new concerns. Instead of trying to predict who was more likely to be creative, researchers (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) began to inquire about the nature of creative thinking within specific content areas and how it developed; additionally, they became curious about social context, developmental concerns, domain specific questions, and cognitive processes.

**Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi's Study -1972 - (Process)**

In a clean break from the trait-oriented research of the Guilford Era, Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1972) conducted a research study that focused specifically on the creative processes of visual artists. The researchers (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) set out to determine if there was a positive correlation between pre-drawing behavior, i.e.

who spent the most time selecting, exploring, and weighing the items to be drawn, and the creativity displayed in the finished drawing.

The methods and procedures used in this study were as follows. The study combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Counting the number of pre-drawing activities exhibited by each of the artists was quantitative; nevertheless, the interviews conducted by the researchers and the evaluations conducted by the experts were qualitative. The study followed a fairly simple procedure; it involved (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) having 31 male fine arts students create a drawing within a studio setting. Numerous objects (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) were provided from which the artists could chose; no restriction was made as to the number of objects that had to be included in the finished drawing. The only requirement (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) placed on the artists was that the drawings should satisfy their own standards. Detailed accounts (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi,1972) were kept of the artists' behavior before beginning to draw and during the drawing process; interviews were conducted after the drawings were completed. Finally, a group of experts (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) ranked the finished drawings.

The researchers (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) sought to discover if the pre-drawing behaviors exhibited by the artists influenced the outcomes of the drawings. They (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) focused on three points of observation for each artist before he began to draw, they were:

> the number of objects picked up and examined;
>
> the extent to which he either chose to draw the same objects that everyone else did, or chose more unusual ones;
>
> the extent to which he explored the objects by stroking, weighing, moving their parts, etc. (p. 163)

The authors (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) believed that the variety of type and the time involved in pre-drawing behaviors had a direct influence on the successful outcome of the finished piece; they felt that pre-drawing actions exemplified the search by each artist to formulate an artistic problem. They said, " … he might pose a problem

of color - for example, how to give a relatively monochromatic drawing color variation - by choosing all his objects in a limited yellow-brown color range" (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972, p. 163). Additionally, the researchers (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) proposed:

> if creativity lies in the artist's ability to discover and formulate a fresh problem, then his behavior in manipulating, exploring, and selecting the elements of his problem - in this case, the objects to be drawn - should have been closely related to the creativity displayed in his finished drawing. (p. 164)

Through this study Getzel and Csikszentmihalyi (1972) were able to establish a specific relationship between the length of time involved in the pre-drawing behaviors and the quality of the drawings; it was confirmed that the more time spent on pre-drawing activities, the higher the experts ranked the drawings on creativity.

**Critique of Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi's Study**

I found the study described above to be rather troubling in three aspects. First, it was never stated whether or not all the artists actually included any of the objects that had been provided by the researchers in their drawings. Second, only scant attention was paid to the interviews mentioned in the study; and finally, someone other than the artists selected the items to be used as subject matter for the drawings.

We had no way of knowing if the artists actually drew any of the objects they were presented with at the beginning of the study. By their own admission, the researchers placed no restrictions on the drawings made by the artists. Nevertheless, the implication was quite clear, the researchers (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) stated, "we furnished a number of objects to be drawn; the artist could select as many or as few as he wanted and arrange them according to his own preference before beginning to draw" (p. 162). Due to the open-ended nature of the instructions given to the artists, we did not know if indeed any, some, all, or none, of the objects that were used to observe pre-drawing behaviors actually wound up being utilized by the artists in the finished drawings. An artist with a vivid imagination could have made an outstanding drawing that did not include any of the objects presented by the researchers, even after having

spent an unduly long period of time touching, manipulating, and/or arranging the objects. If this did happen, the expert judges would have been evaluating a drawing that was made using the imagination of the artist. There would have been no way of knowing what, if any, effect the objects had on the finished drawing.

The second area that I found troubling was the lack of discussion or analysis of the interviews that were to have followed the drawing experiment. Only one interview was mentioned involving an artist who drew a solitary white sphere in one corner of the paper, and in the opposite corner he placed a grouping of other objects. During the interview the artist (Getzel & Csikszentmihalyi, 1972) revealed, "on one level the drawing tried to resolve the feeling of loneliness when confronted with a group of people" (p. 163-164). The researchers did not tell us if the "solitary white sphere" was actually one of the original objects that had been given to the artists at the onset of the drawing phase of the experiment, or had the sphere been generated solely through the fantasy of the artist? It seemed more likely that the artist voluntarily added, or made-up, the solitary white sphere in an effort to portray the feeling of loneliness that he had been striving for. In either case, the researchers failed to try and connect the artists' reflections about loneliness to any prior state of mind, event, sensory experience, or any other psychological state that could have had an impact on the images in the drawing. The researchers said at the onset of the study that they wanted to know what the artist does when he was creating. Equally interesting to me, and certainly more informative of the nature of the creative process, was why they were doing what they were doing.

Finally, I found the practice of selecting the subject matter for the artists to draw quite bothersome. If one wanted to get a complete picture of the creative process, then the selection process should not have been omitted. I was convinced that an essential part of the creative process was the determination of which image(s) were to have been used in the final work of art. What one chose, or did not choose to be included in his/her artwork, was just as important as any other choice that the artist made throughout the creative process. Additionally, if the researcher waited to begin analyzing the artist at the point when the subject matter was already decided and fabrication was about to begin,

he/she would get only a partial view of the creative process that was not comprehensive or authentic.

I found it extremely interesting that only male subjects were used in the Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi Study in 1972, however, Catharine Patrick utilized the same number of male and female artists in her study conducted in 1937.

**Current Trends - (Creativity as Multi-dimensional Activity)**

Since the 1980s, a major shift in the field of creativity research had been noted. The key to this research was its multi-faceted focus. The movement has been toward developmental studies designed to look at creativity as a multi-dimensional activity. This research sought to discover the conditions in which new thoughts were constructed and to explore the part played by culture within specific content areas. In this conception, creativity was composed of several processes that operated at a variety of levels with possible interplay between the different levels. Researchers in the field (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) hoped that this new research framework would "help us move toward a better understand of how new ideas occur, how they are brought to expression and how to comprehend the conditions that tend to favor such events" (p. 16).

Scholars utilizing this new framework have described three dimensions that they felt were the most promising areas for analysis. Csikszentmihalyi (1988b) stated:

> One of these is the *field*, which refers to the social and cultural aspects of a profession, job, or craft. A second is the *domain*, which refers to the structure and organization of a body of knowledge evolved to contain and express certain distinct forms of information. And finally, there is the *individual person*, the site of the acquisition, organization, and transformation of knowledge that has the possibility of changing domains and fields. (p. 223)

Numerous researchers (Barron, 1988; Jackson & Messick, 1965; Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) had emphasized their support for combining these three dimensions of analysis when conducting studies in creativity. Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner (1994), " … recommend that each perspective be continuously considered even when one or another has been selected for emphasis" (p. 20).

**Evolving Systems Approach (ESA)**

Each of these three dimensions of analysis was broken down further into more specific areas of research, one of which was known as the "individual-oriented approach." Three creativity researchers (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) that utilized multi-faceted analysis with an emphasis on the individual were Howard Gruber, David Feldman, and Howard Gardner. Gruber and his associates (Gruber & Wallace, 2001) utilized the "evolving systems approach" (ESA) whereby they described creativity in terms of evolving systems of knowledge, feelings, and purposes or goals. Interestingly, Gruber (Wallace & Gruber, 1989) has emphasized the developmental aspects of creative people and proposed the examination of "networks of enterprise" such as interconnected sets of goals, purposes, projects, and preoccupations that he believed were characteristic of creative individuals. The development of these networks may lead to a better understanding of how a given person organized his/her creative endeavors.

**Images of Wide Scope**

An exceptionally intriguing idea (Gruber & Davis, 1988; Wallace & Gruber, 1989) that has been introduced by Gruber was that creative individuals used "images of wide scope." These images were over-arching guides that both directed and informed the theories and the speculations of the creative person. They were studied over time, (Wallace & Gruber, 1989), "How common they are, and how influential they become to the work of a given individual, are questions of great interest when studying creativity at the individual level" (p. 50).

**Three Internal Systems (Reflectiveness, Transformational Impulses, Change)**

Feldman (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) also focused on the individual in his multi-faceted approach to creativity research; his emphasis was on specific thought processes. He (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) sought to describe various types of distinctive mental processes that were needed to transform and extend knowledge. He (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) proposed three discrete, yet interrelated internal systems working together to create new ideas; he referred to them as*, reflectiveness, transformational impulses from the unconscious, and*

*changing the world*. According to Feldman (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994), *reflectiveness* was the most important system, he stated:

> It is an ability that makes possible the belief that we can know ourselves, can hold our experiences up for examination, can build a sense of uniqueness that we usually call a sense of self or identity. It is also of course a great deal of what we mean by consciousness, and makes possible virtually all of the symbolic and abstract activity that is the hallmark of human thought. (p. 32)

**Transformational Impulses from the Unconscious**

Feldman (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) also believed that *transformational impulses from the unconscious* were important aspects of the mental processes of the creative individual. New and creative changes (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) were brought about by the transformational imperative that derived from unconscious experiences that were powerful, but were unbounded by the current restraints of reality. Communication (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) existed within the creative individual between conscious and unconscious mental activities, a type of ongoing "internal traffic." Feldman (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) felt certain that any description of creativity must include references to the unconscious.

**Changing the World**

The third internal system described by Feldman (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) was *changing the world*; he felt that creative people had a special awareness that the world can be changed. The unconscious mind (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gruber, 1994) disdained stability and demanded change, while the conscious areas of the mind sought predictability; he was convinced that new ideas were born out of this dialogue between stability and change. In explaining his ideas about change, Feldman (as cited in Ghiselin, 1952) quoted the biologist R. W. Gerard (1946):

> Imagination, not reason, creates the novel. It is to social inheritance what mutation is to biological inheritance; it accounts for the arrival of the fittest. Reason or logic, applied when judgment indicates that the new is promising, acts

like natural selection to pan the gold grains from the sand and insure the survival of the fittest. Imagination supplies the premises and asks the questions from which reason supplies the conclusions as a calculating machine supplies answers. (p. 227)

**Multiple Intelligences**

Gardner (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) had also emphasized the individual while he utilized a multi-faceted approach to the study of highly accomplished individuals; he believed that creativity could be successfully studied on a variety of levels that existed within each person. He (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) proposed that biologically influenced "intelligences," occurring in any number of combinations might surface within the individual at an early age thereby influencing his/her decision to enter one domain or another.

Gardner (1983) developed a theory of "multiple intelligences" that included, linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, special bodily-kinesthetic, and personal intelligence. An intelligence (Gardner, 1983) must include skills that enabled the individual to bring authentic problems to resolution and, when necessary, to produce a product; an individual with a particular intelligence possessed the ability to find or create problems that could ultimately serve as the source of new knowledge.

**Gardner & Nemirovsky Study - 1991 -(Multi-dimensional Framework)**

In 1991, Howard Gardner and Ricardo Nemirovsky conducted a research study in which they analyzed and compared two creative individuals using a multi-dimensional framework. The researchers (Gardner & Nemirovsky, 1991) expressed their belief that in-depth case studies of exceptional people from different disciplines can help us to find commonality within their creative processes that can be generalized across domains; they hoped to discover principles that extended beyond the individual or the discipline.

In this study, comparisons were made between the mathematician Georg Cantor's study of various orders of infinity, and the psychologist Sigmund Freud's exploration of the operation of the unconscious. Comparisons between the two men were made in four areas: expression of their new intuition, the way they developed an explanatory

framework, the development of a new symbol system, and the manner in which they made clear their ideas or "thema."

The research design of this study was extremely complex. It was an historical, cognitive/psychological, qualitative/comparative case study. It had an historical aspect because the authors pieced together their data solely from information that was produced in the past. The study utilized a cognitive/psychological approach because it delved into the mental structures and processes used by the individuals. It was qualitative because the emphasis was on the subjects' thoughts, intentions, and meanings, rather than on quantifiable phenomena. The study was also comparative because direct comparisons were made between the discovery processes of the two men.

**Critique of the Gardner & Nemirovsky Study**

There were three aspects of this study that I found quite bothersome. First, was the exclusive reliance on indirect methods of inquiry; second, was a comparison between individuals without seeking relationships within each individual; and third, was a failure to thoroughly analyze the differences of the two subjects. Due to the fact that both subjects in the study were deceased, the researchers were forced to rely entirely on indirect method of inquiry, i. e. journals, letters, papers, reports, books, etc. Even though much was learned from these sources of data, I felt that direct inquiry through interview and/or observation offered indispensable insights into the creative process. My research relied heavily on direct methods of inquiry.

The second aspect of this study that I found troubling was the manner in which the four levels of the inquiry were analyzed. Intuition, explanatory framework, symbol system, and thema were discussed as separate entities presented within each of the subjects. Next, the four areas were compared between the two individuals; however, no analysis was provided as to how these four dimensions worked together within the mind of each individual to produce a major break-through.

The third aspect of this study that I found troubling was the lack of a thorough discussion of the differences of the two subjects. The researchers dealt with their differences by acknowledging them, but not by analyzing them. One such difference

referenced by the authors was the cosmological stances of the two men. Cantor felt that he was developing a view of math that had a religious dimension, one that could ultimately solve some of the mysteries of the universe. Freud, on the other hand, was skeptical of all religious systems – he saw himself as a natural scientist that precisely placed the areas of the mind into an ordered format including, perception, memory, unconscious, preconscious, and voluntary motor activity. I found these statements very interesting, but at the same time they contributed almost nothing to our understanding of the creative processes utilized by either Freud or Cantor.

The approach taken in this research was backward to me. I believed that one should first study independently the creative individuals within the various domains of creativity, i.e., math, science, music, art, etc., and once the nature of the creative processes within each field were better understood, then comparisons could more easily be made between disciplines.

This study contributed greatly to our understanding of the complexity and challenges of case study research. Some of the drawbacks to the intensive case study were highlighted, such as, its time-consuming nature, and with deceased subjects, the problems with data that were oftentimes partial, inaccurate, or even missing. Gardner and Nemirovsky (1991) also substituted over-zealous knowledge claims, such as seeking to develop "laws of creativity" for developing "principles of understanding." Another aspect of the article that I liked was presenting the background information prior to the discussion of each of the men. The authors explained the problems facing Cantor and Freud – the infinite and unconscious respectively – in such a way that it was easy to understand how their questions developed and how enormous the problems were that they faced.

I believed that creative people either discovered or fabricated unique problems that they were motivated to solve. Once a creative person was aware of this "unique problem," he/she was compelled to do one of two things. He/she must search for a solution to the problem by manipulating already existing symbol systems, or, if an adequate symbol system was unavailable an adequate one must be invented. Reading

about how Freud and Cantor could find no symbol system that met their needs made me try to relate the same situation to a major discovery in art. The first Cubist painting, *Les Desmoiselles D'Avignon*, 1907, by Pablo Picasso, came to mind. Picasso's "unique problem" was that he wanted to find a way to show multiple views of his three-dimensional subjects on the surface of a two-dimensional canvas. Picasso was aware of the rules of mathematical perspective that had been worked out during the Renaissance. However, mathematical perspective allowed the subject to be represented from only one point of view within the two-dimensional painting. Picasso invented the practice of painting multiple, small, fractured views of the subject matter from various positions or angles, all the way around 360 degrees. Thus, by depicting small partial glimpses of the subject from numerous angles he was able to give the viewer the sensation of walking completely around the subject and experiencing what had heretofore only been represented in painting from one stationary vantage point.

Of course as a researcher, for me this was a very powerful idea, the creating of new symbol systems to go with ideas that were so radical that all the established symbol systems were inadequate. Many creative people worked quite well within the confines of established methods of expression, i.e., the novel, poem, one-act play, or impressionistic style of painting. This study reminded me that the traditional symbol systems that we took for granted possibly were not sufficient to handle many truly original ideas.

Even though I found the overall concept of this study extremely intriguing, nevertheless there were some things that I did not like. I did not care for the way that the authors discussed all four major areas of similarities between Cantor and Freud individually before making any comparisons at all. By the time I had read the extensive and detailed discussions for both men it was hard to remember details from each category well enough to make a clear and direct comparison. This situation could have been avoided by describing Cantor's experiences with intuition followed immediately with a discussion of Freud's experiences with intuition. It may have been presented in this way partly because the authors had very little to say about intuition. Gardner and Nemirovsky's only comment about intuition (1991) was that both men developed strong

intuitions about what they wanted to study early in their careers. They did not elaborate on the similarities or differences of the onset of intuition between the two men, the nature of their intuition, or its importance to their discoveries.

**Purpose of my study**

Aristotle (1996) once said, "the good of all was served when each person did something about what he thought and believed … people should act on what their study of life convinced them was right" (p. 229). The principles upon which I have based this research stemmed from my personal experiences in the creative processes of painting, drawing, and sculpting over the past 40 years.

**Conscious - Unconscious - Sensory Experiences**

The purpose of my research, then, was to study as directly as possible the ways in which visual artists utilized both conscious and unconscious mental activity in their art making and to describe the impact of sensory experiences on their creative processes. In this case, the word "conscious" referred to any known psychological state of which one was aware, such as reasoning or reflection. The word "unconscious" referred to a psychological state that arose from any source of which one was unaware, such as fantasy, daydreaming, imagination, or inspiration. The terms "sensory experience" referred to perceptual encounters that were generated by or stimulated the senses. Visual artists were defined as individuals who entered into the process of fabricating physical works of art such as paintings, sculptures, or drawings. I carefully and purposely chose highly accomplished artists; therefore the cases of creativity were unambiguous.

The following investigation:

**(1)** began to identify and describe the processes used by accomplished visual artists in making works of art,

**(2)** attempted to describe the context and circumstances in which the artists worked, with an emphasis on the factors (both conscious and unconscious) that, stimulated or led up to the actual physical fabrication of a work of art, and continued to promote the creative process so that the work of art was carried to a state of satisfactory completion,

**(3)** outlined the life style and culture of the artists involved in making the art,

**(4)** assembled information from which inferences could be made concerning the values which various experience held for the artists in the production of their work,

**(5)** speculated as to how specific thought processes, and sensory experiences had been acquired, remembered, recognized as important, and ultimately utilized by the artists in the study.

My study examined the personal creative processes of working artists as they lived, were inspired, and fabricated works of art in their own unique environments. Although this research was not conducted in a school setting, knowledge that was acquired will allow art teachers to incorporate a broader array of potential approaches and responses to the creative processes identified in the classroom setting.

In conclusion, the long history of creativity theory, combined with the relatively short but rich history of creativity research, together formed a robust foundation for those of us desiring to expand our knowledge of the challenging, yet exciting subject of human artistic creativity.

## Chapter III

### 3. Methodology

**3.1 Design of the study**. The research questions raised as part of the problem will determine to a significant extent the type of information needed to answer them. The information needed will determine the type of investigation and the sources of the data. In this section of the proposal indicate what methodology (ies) you intend to use, e. g. historical, experimental, case study, survey, etc. Support the use of this methodology through reference to related studies.

**3.2 Participants/location of research**. Specify who or what you will investigate in your study and where the research will take place. How will the participants, programs, or objects be selected and the setting determined?

**3.3 Methods of data collection**. Indicate the exact procedures and sequence of events you will use to collect data. Also, specify the nature of materials and/or instruments you will use to gather data.

**3.4 Methods of data analysis**. Indicate how you will analyze the information or data. How will you make sense out of the evidence you collect? How will you interpret the data and how will you relate it to the research questions of your investigation? Normally, you must put the data - whether consisting of test scores, descriptions of historical events, observations, or other forms - into some form consistent with the selected research methodology. In historical research this may consist of categorizations or interpretations, while in experimental studies it may involve statistical computations. You are not expected to know what statistical computations are required; rather indicate what comparisons you intend to examine, e.g. comparing one variable to another.

## 3.1 Design of Study

Section (3.1) was divided into four areas. It includes an introduction to the problems and challenges associated with the development of a research methodology. Four traditional paradigms employed in visual art and creativity research (Positivist, Critical Theory, Postmodern, and Interpretivist/constructivist) were discussed, along with their relevancy to the proposed study. Additionally, a contemporary approach to research in the visual arts recently developed by Graeme Sullivan entitled "Art Practice" was described. And finally, the methodologies to be used in the proposed study were identified, and related research studies were discussed.

In his book *Art as Experience,* Dewey (1934) offered a challenge to the artist that could just as easily be applied to the researcher. Dewey (1934) said, "If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind" (p. 50). Developing a research methodology to study the creative process was in itself a creative undertaking. Any new proposed inquiry into creativity should have been the product of meticulous considerations of innovative, original, and contemporary methods and approaches, as well as the careful reassessment of techniques and measurements that have been utilized in the past. The blending of various research methodologies resulted in the development of a unique approach to the proposed study.

The purpose of this section was to develop a research methodology that could be utilized in the investigation of the creative processes, sensitizing experiences, cognitive structures (both conscious and unconscious), and the problem-forming activities of four visual artists as they worked within a natural setting. When establishing a research methodology it was essential that a well-defined plan be devised for selecting subjects and for collecting and analyzing data. Ultimately, the methodology that emerged should be closely aligned with the intentions, goals, and design of this study. Ulbricht (1976) stated: "Since various research methodologies embody theories of their own, any research methodology must be carefully scrutinized to make sure that it matches the purpose and intent of the investigation" (p. 26).

Selecting a methodology was both a demanding and rigorous task that was and should have been, influenced by the personae of the researcher. Goetz and LeCompte (as cited in Melrose, 1989) commented, "The research questions that investigators formulate are influenced implicitly or explicitly by the personal experiences and philosophies that shape their interests and the way they think" (p. 33). Therefore, prior to the formation of an original research design, the implicit philosophical assumptions embedded within a variety of paradigms and methodologies employed in the study of creativity were discussed.

## Research Paradigms

The theoretical framework (paradigm) selected for a research study related directly to the type of questions that the researcher asked and the methodologies chosen for acquiring answers. In order to demonstrate the wide range of paradigms, along with their associated theories and methodologies that have been used in the study of creativity or in visual arts research, four were described here in detail. The paradigms were positivist, critical theory, postmodern, and interpretivist/constructivist (phenomenology). The characteristics of their ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions were also reviewed. The main theorists, schools of thought, and theories that reflected each paradigm were highlighted. The various philosophies expressed in these paradigms were expansive enough to serve as a foundation upon which a sound methodology for the proposed study was built. The categories discussed, however, did not represent all the possible methods that social scientists in various fields or visual arts researchers have used to describe and analyze phenomena such as creativity or the creative process.

## Positivist Paradigm

There were two basic affirmations guiding positivism, (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online) they were – that all knowledge regarding matters of fact was based on the "positive" data of experience, and that there was a realm of pure logic and pure mathematics which existed beyond the realm of fact.

When judging the quality of a study in the positivist paradigm several important aspects were considered. How rigorous was the control over the internal validity? Did

the results meet the criterion of external validity (generalizability) established by the study? And finally, did the study meet an overall high standard of reliability and objectivity?

The French philosopher Auguste Comte was closely associated with positivism. Comte's work (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online) gave positivism its distinctive features as a philosophical ideology and movement. Through the *Societe' Positiviste*, founded in 1848, Comte (Crotty, 1998) popularized the term "positivism." Through use of the scientific method Comte believed that order could be found in the world. Whether you were looking at nature or society, in either case you should look for constant relationships that could be shown to exist among various phenomena and laws or facts that characterized particular types of beings on a regular basis (Crotty, 1998).

The ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs espoused by the positivists were very specific in nature. Ontologically, positivists were realists; they believed there was a "there there." Additionally, they believed that it was possible to know all things about a reality that could be quantified, measured and categorized. Much like the Enlightenment from which positivism evolved, they both (Crotty, 1998) espoused a belief in the possibility of accurate and unambiguous knowledge of the world. Epistemologically, the positivists were objectivists. The truth was in the object. Reality was composed of facts – the right methods could be used to discover the truth (facts). Knowledge was not constructed; it was discovered. The investigator and the object were two different and separate entities. They had no effect on each other. Methodologically, the positivists used the scientific method. They stated their hypothesis in a propositional format and then subjected it to empirical testing. *A priori* procedures (Lather, 1996) and/or theories, that can be tested and confirmed, were utilized by positivists.

Logical positivism, the verification principle, and Popper's principle of falsification were schools of thought closely associated with positivism. According to logical positivism (Crotty, 1998), facts were established through verification and knowledge became verified if it was experienced directly through our senses or through the use of scientific instruments that expanded the abilities of our senses. Popper (Crotty,

1998) disagreed with the induction process whereby a general law was established through the accumulation of a large number of specific examples that all pointed to the same conclusion. The challenge for scientists, according to Popper (Crotty, 1998), was to try to prove the theory wrong, rather than to continue to prove the theory was correct - which was an impossibility.

**Leonardo da Vinci (Positivism)**

Leonardo da Vinci was a positivist who used his keen sense of observation as a scientist, inventor, and as an artist. In addition to painting, Leonardo (Rosten, 1993) also invented scissors, the bicycle, a type of machine gun, the tank, the submarine, the parachute, and the helicopter, among other things. The contemporary understanding of positivism (Crotty, 1998) was that, "what is posited… in direct experience is what is observed, the observation in question being scientific observation carried out by way of the scientific method" (p. 20). This had direct links to a journal entry made by Leonardo during the early 16th century, he wrote (Rosten, 1993), "Science is the knowledge of all things that are possible" (p. 158). Leonardo (Rosten, 1993) was able to describe physical phenomenon that had never been previously observed, such as the fact that wind could move the surface of a pond without disturbing the bottom of the pond and that water would never move of its own volition except when descending.

Crotty (1998) identified as "verified knowledge" that which we saw or experienced through our senses. According to Rosten (1993), Leonardo felt that he could understand anything – he was obsessed with what he called, "saper vedere," ("knowing how to see") (p. 158). He expressed a strong belief that observation was the key to knowledge in his *Treatise on Painting*, Leonardo (Wallace, 1966) stated:

> You should often amuse yourself when you take a walk for recreation, in watching and taking note of the attitudes and actions of men as they talk and dispute, or laugh or come to blows with one another … noting these down with rapid strokes, in a little pocket-book which you ought always to carry with you … you should keep those sketches as your patterns and teachers. (p. 17)

Leonardo also possessed the positivist's epistemology of objectivism. Objects (Crotty, 1998) possessed inherent meanings that had an existence apart from our knowledge or comprehension of them. Along with Brunelleschi and Alberti, Leonardo (Hudson, 1970) codified and utilized linear perspective during the Renaissance. Earlier in history, ancient Roman painters (Hudson, 1970) had made attempts at portraying the visual phenomenon of objects receding in the distance, but were never able to elaborate the laws governing linear perspective (the way the eye actually sees). In his comments about Leonardo's painting of the *Last Supper*, Wallace (1966) said, "Leonardo drew his figures first and then provided a background that … seems spacious and almost airy – a masterpiece of linear perspective" (p. 83). The positivist would have argued that the laws of linear perspective were always there, but it took scientific, systematic observation to uncover them.

**Positivism (Psychometric Testing) - relevancy to proposed study**

One research method, found within the positivist paradigm, which has been extensively used by art educators and those interested in the study of creativity, was psychometric testing. From 1950 -1970 psychometric testing was the main approach taken in creativity research. Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner (1994) commented, "It was not the only line of research pursued during this period, but it was by far the most prominent and influential, and the best-funded social science work ever undertaken in this country" (p. 6).

Researchers utilized psychometric testing for its predictive potential. Guilford, the founder of the psychometric movement, (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) believed that tests for creative traits could be devised that would be far more accurate in predicting talent than the existing IQ tests. Indeed, in an Air Force study (Barron, 1955) a set of personality indicators was found that surfaced more often or in greater intensity in the individuals that were ranked as more creative by their superiors.

The psychometric method also assumed that generalizations could be formed. According to Ulbricht (1976), through the use of this methodology, meaningful things

had been concluded about drawing, aesthetic valuing, perception, and other areas related to art in specific situations, however the results could not be used to predict how an individual might have behaved in a different situation.

Psychometric testing did not offer a sufficient venue for uncovering, identifying, or explaining the intricacies involved in the creative processes utilized within the visual arts, all of which were concerns of the proposed study. Methodological doubts (Graeme, 2005) had been expressed by qualitative researchers who believed the positivists' reliance on limited notions of rationality and empiricism to guide inquiry, was insufficient. Many aspects of the creative process were covert and must be studied indirectly. They did not lend themselves to empirical inquiry. Even those aspects of the creative process that were overt still required dialogue with the creator before interpretations, understandings, and insights could be uncovered. Additionally, psychometric testing neither yielded information about internal processes, nor systems of working utilized by artists, nor did it allow for the description of internal states (mental or emotional), both of which were major aspects examined in the proposed study.

**Critical Theory Paradigm**

Crotty (1998) maintained that critical theory today was skeptical of constructed meanings derived from our culture, he stated: "Each set of meanings supports particular power structures, resists moves toward greater equity, and [harbours] oppression, manipulation, and other modes of injustice and unfreedom" (p. 60). Additionally, Geertz (as cited in Crotty, 1998) believed that culture was an elaborate controlling system that directed both our thoughts and behavior, not unlike a computer program.

The ontological, epistemological, and methodological viewpoints of the critical theory paradigm were specifically defined. Ontologically, the critical theorists were realists. For them there was a "there, there," but it was always seen through the lens of power. Reality (Lather, 1996) was constructed and multiple realities could be apprehended, nevertheless inequities could be promoted by a dominant construction of reality. Historical realism was acknowledged. Epistemologically, the way we know was framed by power. Researchers (Lather, 1996) working in the critical theory paradigm

attempted to understand social constructions through symbolic representation, however they understood that knowledge of the dominant culture was promoted, whereas other forms of knowledge were obscured. In critical theory there was interaction between subject and investigator. Knowledge grew and changed through a dialectical process of historical revision. Critical theorists utilized a variety of research methods that drew attention to injustices and facilitated the change process. They engaged in the combination of theory and action known as *praxis*. In their research they used both observation and interviews.

Karl Marx and Paulo Freire were closely associated with the critical theory paradigm. Marx laid the foundation of critical thought (Crotty, 1998) still in use today. Marx (Crotty, 1998) was able to synthesize economics, philosophy, and history; the main force shaping society was economics, therefore those who controlled the means of production were also those who were able to control the way we think. Freire (Crotty, 1998) believed that the starting point was the 'here and now' or the situation that the individual was presently experiencing; he/she must emerge from that situation, reflect on it, and finally take action in an effort to alter their fate.

The Institute for Social Research (Crotty, 1998) spawned The Frankfurt School that eventually adopted critical theory as its philosophical stance. In developing critical theory, Horkheimer (as cited in Crotty, 1998) attempted to bring together theory and practice with the aim of creating a more just society; it would become a force for historical revolution.

**The Guerrilla Girls, Andy Warhol, & Pablo Picasso (Critical Theory)**

Artists such as The Guerrilla Girls, Andy Warhol, and Pablo Picasso have made critical statements about various forms of oppression within our culture. Crotty (1998) maintained that critical theory today was skeptical of constructed meanings derived from our culture and he said, “Each set of meanings supports particular power structures, resists moves toward greater equity, and [harbours] oppression, manipulation, and other modes of injustice and unfreedom” (p. 60).

Geertz (as cited in Crotty, 1998) believed that culture was an elaborate controlling system that directed both our thoughts and behavior, not unlike a computer program. Warhol (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) understood the control that mass media had acquired within the consumer culture that was prevalent in the United States during the 1960s. Through the use of familiar multiple images, i.e. Campbell soup cans or Marilyn Monroe's face, Warhol was able to mass-produce works of art. He rejected the modernist idea of one-of-a-kind pieces, and at the same time he questioned preconceived notions of what was acceptable subject matter for art. In the same vein, The Guerrilla Girls (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) were compelled to point out their concept of the racist and sexist orientation of dominant American institutions: they considered themselves to be the "conscience of the art world" (p.1136).

The ability to develop a critical spirit according to Crotty (1998) was not easy given the layers of interpretation that have been piled on top of one another – he described this process as "sedimentation." Crotty (1998) believed that we became removed from reality to the point that the cultural sediment became a barrier to our understanding. Wild (as cited in Crotty, 1998) spoke of our "imprisonment in a world of our own construction" (p. 59). Picasso tried to break apart this barrier with his 1937 painting entitled *Guernica*. He wanted us to see man's inhumanity to man in a fresh light and to view war anew in all its horror and injustice. His cubist method of breaking the forms apart was a new way of visually depicting war. Picasso (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) stated, "Painting is not made to decorate apartments. It is an instrument for offensive and defensive war against the enemy" (p. 1063). For Picasso, art was a personal way to fight oppression by breaking down his conceived notions of power.

**Critical Theory - relevancy to proposed study**

One of the prominent ways that critical theory research has been employed was in the promotion of Multicultural Art Education (MCAE). A notable goal of MCAE was to incorporate the study of art works produced by non-western cultures, minorities, and women, among others, into existing art courses, in both studio and art history. In *Art Education and Multiculturalism*, Mason (1988) utilized qualitative methods of research

to develop both a conceptual basis for curricula design and art programs that explored issues related to multicultural teaching.

The goals and assumptions that characterized the critical theory paradigm differed from those of the proposed study in a variety of ways. Researchers in critical theory (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997) hoped to expose power centers, hidden assumptions, and agendas that repressed communication. Critical theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1988) analyzed how social structures conspired to constrain human potential and imagination; they sought to empower individuals against alienation and oppression. The reconceptualists (Pinar, 1975) argued for the reorganization of art education around human consciousness and political action. The photographer Aphrodite Desiree Navab (as cited in Sullivan, 2005) described the use of critical theory in her work, she stated:

> As a woman born and raised in Iran and having lived in the United States for twenty years, I have had to negotiate between competing histories and practices that have often sought to undermine each other. With my camera and my pen I interrogate the visual productions and politics of both cultures. (pp. 131-132)

The proposed study focused on the creative processes utilized in the visual arts; it did not view art production through a lens of power. This study sought to observe and develop insights into how artists worked, thought, and felt prior to, during, and following their art production. It neither sought to establish sources of power that oppressed or hindered artists or to marginalize their work, nor did it promote political action to remedy those sources of oppression. After having taught art in various institutions of higher education for more than a quarter century, my personal experience with institutionalized power, oppression, and bias in the arts was rather extensive. These concerns are real and should be addressed if the field of art education is to become a truly egalitarian pursuit, nevertheless, the social and political concerns of critical theory research, as important as they are to art inquiry, fell outside of the purview of the proposed study.

**Postmodern Paradigm**

Defining postmodernism was difficult because of the multi-faceted nature of the term. Questions raised concerning recent developments in art education have led Pearce

(1992) to conclude that postmodernism was post-paradigmatic; it moved beyond the notion of paradigm. The implication for art education (Pearce, 1992) was that we have entered a post-paradigmatic era that encouraged an ongoing pluralism and was in a perpetual state of metamorphosis. The very appropriate term “slippery” has also been used as a descriptor (Crotty, 1998). According to Stronach & MacLure (1997), postmodernism described as an historical phenomenon was more like a "nervous breakdown rather than a breakthrough" (p.21). Additionally, Crotty (1998) acknowledged that postmodernism was a broad term that included various developments in not only philosophy and the social sciences, but also other areas such as literature, the arts, and architecture, among others. Confusion has also been compounded by well-intentioned researchers in their admitted practice of interchanging terms with similar, but not necessarily identical meanings. In an effort to highlight the loss of confidence in Western conceptual systems, Lather (as cited in Cary, 1991) interchanged the terms postmodern, poststructural, and sometimes deconstruction.

A discussion of some of the more salient characteristics of postmodernism helped to clarify its meaning. Postmodernism (Crotty, 1998) rejected the modernist orientation that was both essentialist and totalistic. Eclecticism, according to Slattery (2001), was an important quality associated with postmodernism that included numerous styles and interdisciplinary approaches. In apparent chaos, there was a dynamic harmony found within the interaction of the whole to its parts, a holistic yin/yang philosophy was accepted over bifurcation whereby long-silenced and marginalized voices were encouraged.

The postmodernists had very specific notions about the nature of the individual. Dallmayr (as cited in Crotty, 1998) related the postmodern concept of self, “ … a radical [decentring] of the subject, privileging ‘nonidentity (or the dispersal of identity) over any stable self-conception’” (p. 185). Additionally, Barrett (2000) posited that the modernist concept of the individual as a unified rational being was also rejected. In opposition to Sartre's existentialist claim that the individual was both free and situated at the center of the universe, postmodernists (Barnett, 2000) removed the individual from the center

claiming that the self was but an effect of the unconscious, social relations, or language. The possibility for the individual to be creative or to effect change was all but negated.

Major theorists in the postmodern paradigm included - Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Baudrillard. Foucault (as cited in Cary, 1991) sought to explain how the subject was situated within power relations and to expose, within institutions, the regimes of power and truth. Derrida was a deconstructionist who was concerned with language. According to Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, (2001) the purpose of deconstruction was to reveal both the instabilities as well as the contradictions of written or visual language. Derrida (as cited in Miller, 2001) said:

> The word deconstruction has nothing to do with destruction. That is to say, it is simply a question of (and this is a necessity of criticism in the classical sense of the word) being alert to the implications, to the historical sedimentation of the language we use and that is not destruction. (p. 271)

The grand narratives, according to Lyotard (as cited in Crotty, 1998), were no longer credible and we must move beyond modernist methods of presentation to present a sense of the unpresentable. Lyotard (as cited in Crotty, 1998), stated: "… it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented" (p. 211). Baudrillard (Crotty, 1998) believed that what was once considered real had been replaced by hyper-reality and he viewed the distinction between reality and the imaginary to have been destroyed – he described this phenomenon as 'simulacra.'

The postmodernists had distinctive ontological, epistemological, and methodological viewpoints. Ontologically, the postmodernists believed there was no "there, there." Loyal Rue (as cited in Crotty, 1998) expressed the postmodernist concept of the nature of being by revealing that people interpreted reality, however reality did not speak directly to us by dictating what was good, beautiful, or true, because inherently reality did not possess qualities, value-laden or otherwise.

Epistemologically, the postmodernists (Crotty, 1998) utilized widespread irony, parody, pastiche and playfulness in the rejection of clear-cut distinctions. Foucault (as

cited in Cary, 2003) believed that, "… they work in and against" (author's lecture notes). Maxine Greene (as cited in Slattery, 2001) felt that by incorporating popular culture, resistant culture, indigenous culture, and other non-traditional cultural components, the postmodernists arrived at a new level of learning that released the imagination and promoted both social justice and equity.

Methodologically, the postmodernist deconstructed, disrupted, revealed, and demystified, among other things. With reference to texts (Slattery, 2001), postmodernists deconstructed texts, written, visual, or auditory in a number of different ways. I shall describe three. By pointing out internal contradictions, omissions, ambiguities, and injustices the researcher (Slattery, 2001) was able to problematize the "text" on many levels. Challenges to texts in any form demanded a re-evaluation of the hidden and overt assumptions in the representations found within the text in light of status quo social arrangements. Through the revelation of deeply rooted prejudices found in the text, the researcher (Slattery, 2001) was able to interrupt the text so that the reader/viewer/listener would be required to pause and revisit these assumptions.

Even though various schools of thought entered into the postmodern realm, one of the most interesting was the concept of post-structuralism. Post-structuralism (Crotty, 1998) rejected both positivism and humanism, was a-historical and theoretical, and it demystified the experience of reality. In Foucault's transformation from structuralism to post-structuralism (Crotty, 1998) his original view of the subject as an empty entity changed to a belief that individuals were constituted by relationships of power. In his later work Foucault, (as cited in Crotty, 1998) said that it was not enough to understand power as repression, constraint or prohibition, power must be seen as a generator of reality. Paradoxically, Foucault (as cited in Crotty, 1998) felt the best that could be done was to disrupt the discourse of power and reveal its indeterminacy along with the possibilities it might have to offer.

**Frank Ghery and Susan Rothenberg (Postmodernism)**

Frank Gehry was a deconstructivist architect whose work exemplified what Ihab Hassan (as cited in Crotty, 1998) called an "unmaking" philosophy. Crotty (1998) said

that in addition to unmaking, other terms such as decentering, demystification, and dispersion highlighted the ontological rejection of the traditional full subject of Western philosophy. The main purpose of the deonstructivist architects (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) was to shock and disorient the viewer; therefore attempts were made to disrupt the traditional architectural categories so as to prevent the viewer from seeing this new architecture through the lenses of the past. Gehry's design for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilboa, Spain epitomized the goals of the deconstructivist architects. Some of the deconstructivist qualities that the museum possessed were disharmony, imbalance, asymmetry, and disorder. One finds no tribute being paid to the Greeks or to the modern idea of "form follows function."

Lather (1991) says, "Pastiche, montage, collage, bricolage and the deliberate conglomerizing of purposes characterize postmodern art and architectural styles" (p. 10). One of the many purposes of postmodern painting (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) was to re-examine and offer commentary on art from earlier time periods. Susan Rothenberg's horse paintings reflected the place of the horse in art history beginning with the Paleolithic Caves of Lascaux and continuing on to the abstract horses of Franz Marc that were so despised by Hitler. Additionally, Rothenberg (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001) said, "The horse was a way of not doing people, yet it was a symbol of people, a self-portrait, really" (p. 114).

**Postmodernism - relevance to proposed study**

The postmodern beliefs and assumptions described above ran counter to those of the proposed study in two ways - first, in the area of acknowledging the potential for individual creativity; and second, in honoring the artist as a source of both information and knowledge creation.

In the postmodern era (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997), the art student was challenged to produce art that critically interpreted cultural forms and interactions, not to produce new forms. Postmodernism emphasized neither the concept of creativity nor the centrality of the individual in the process of making art. The person was not viewed as a rational being that possessed a clear self-concept. Indeed, postmodernism valued a lack

of identity and the loss of self; the potential was minimized for an individual to act as a transformational agent. Dewey posited (Schutz, 2000), that aesthetic activity was always marginal to the larger structure of normalized society; nevertheless, he acknowledged the value of individual artistic activity to the community as a whole. Dewey (as cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) stated, "those who have the gift of creative expression should disclose the meaning of individuality to others" (p. 250).

The second area of divergence between the postmodern approach and the proposed study was in the valuing of the subject's understanding of reality. Postmodern researchers doubted the subject's ability to comprehend reality, believing that the individual existed within a state of perpetual self-deception. They were in agreement with Sartre's stance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), that most people possessed a "false consciousness." According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), " Foucault and the postmodernists, have made it clear that what people tell us does not reflect real events, but only a style of narrative, a way of talking that refers only to itself" (p. 20). I was in agreement with Csikszentmihalyi's comment (1997): "The profound doubts of Sartre and Foucault notwithstanding I still think that when a person says he is "pretty happy," one has no right to ignore his statement, or interpret it to mean the opposite" (p. 20).

In the proposed study it was assumed that reality was whatever the artist understood it to be. The artists, any revelations about their creative processes, and their works were the final authority. It was also assumed that artists could and did create novel works that were deemed creative by their peers, experts within the visual arts, and society in general. Additionally, the studio experience was conceived as a bountiful source for gaining insight into the thoughts and actions of the artist who was not only aware of his/her "self" as a rational creator, but also one that was able to be influenced by intuition and the subconscious.

**Art Practice**

Graeme Sullivan, Associate Professor of Art Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, recently put forth an alternative approach to visual arts research. In his book *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry into the Visual Arts*, Sullivan (2005), set forth

three compelling arguments supporting visual arts practice as a form of research. First, he supported the concept that cultural inquiry undertaken by artists was a form of research and that the practices, contexts and themes of artistic inquiry were situated within the discourse of research. Second, he argued that by choosing research methods other than those utilized by the social sciences legitimate research goals could be achieved; the common ground in both the social sciences and art practice was attention to rigor and systematic inquiry. Finally, he argued that the "imaginative intellect" emphasized by artists in criticizing, constructing, and creating knowledge was both new and possessed the potential to transform human understanding.

In describing his conception of arts practice as research, Sullivan (2005) offered three content areas; they were the context for visual arts research, theorizing visual arts practice, and visual arts research practices. The context for visual arts research (Sullivan, 2005) was situated historically as a culturally grounded and institutionally bound area of artistic and educational inquiry. Scientific inquiry was limited in scope, even though it was the more prominent and valued method of institutional inquiry; Sullivan (2005) therefore advocated for an arts based research that could add a fuller dimension to human need and knowing. In an effort to gain credibility for visual arts research, Sullivan (2005) sought to align the methods of visual arts research with previously established and accepted methods used in the sciences.

The second facet of Sullivan's concept was theorizing visual arts practice. Sullivan (2005) believed that from a theoretical perspective, visual arts practice was both a robust area of inquiry as well as a transformative approach to creating and critiquing knowledge. He advocated for visual arts research grounded in the tradition of "making" (Sullivan, 2005), noting that even though visual arts practices were found everywhere, in artist's studios, galleries, communities, on the street, and the inter-net, nevertheless they had not found a rightful place within institutional settings. Visual data collected in research (Sullivan, 2005) could be used to move beyond the contribution of explanatory knowledge production to the more ambitious state of transformative knowledge construction.

The third aspect of Sullivan's concept was visual arts research practices. Sullivan (2005) described a range of strategies and approaches for the planning and execution of visual arts studies, however he maintained that the centerpiece for research in the visual arts was the studio experience, he stated:

> By proclaiming the role of studio experience as the keystone event around which consequent inquiries can be pursued, all that is central to the art experience and all that is available through related theories and domains of inquiry can be brought to bear on the ideas, issues and interests at hand. (p. 220)

Sullivan (2005) situated the artist and the artist's visual practice (exhibitions, performances, exegesis/thesis, and proposals) in the center of the research design; around the outer edges he placed three other areas of inquiry, the artwork, the viewer, and the setting. He devised the term "transcognition" (Sullivan, 2005) to describe the relationship of the artist to the other areas of the study. Transcognition (Sullivan, 2005) was a dynamic and reflexive type of visual arts knowing that placed both the imaginative and intellectual processes that described how artists think, between, within, and around the self, their artworks and others, viewers, and settings where each was used to create new understandings.

In addition to placing the studio experience at the core of visual arts research, Sullivan (2005) advocated the artist hold a prominent position in the design of the research study. Sullivan (2005) felt that the main interest in visual arts research was to investigate how knowledge was created in the process of making art, therefore questions about the processes and products of artistic knowing should be addressed. In order to accomplish these goals (Sullivan, 2005), the artist could assume the roles of both the researcher and the object of study; he supported practitioner research whereby the artist took on multiple roles of theorist, researcher, and subject of the research inquiry.

In summary, Sullivan (2005) described visual arts research practices as theoretically robust, idea based, process rich, purposeful, strategic, creative in the use of adaptive methods, and connected to, but also distinct from traditional systems of inquiry.

**Art Practice - relevance to proposed study**

It was much too soon to evaluate Art Practice as either an academically sound or intellectually rigorous approach to research in the visual arts. Until the unique aspects of this approach were thoroughly defined, details were clarified, and more studies became available, it would be premature to select art practice as the basis for the design of the proposed study. Nevertheless, Sullivan's emphasis on the need for trans-disciplinary visual arts research, his support for the concept of the artist-as-theorist, and his centering of the studio experience all held substantial promise for the acceptance of Art Practice in the future.

**Interpretivist/constructivist (Phenomenology)**

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm (Mertens, 1998) grew out of Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology, and Dilthey's study (Eichelberger, 1989) of interpretive understandings called *hermeneutics*. Husserl's phenomenology (Collinson, 1987) viewed the physical world and individual human consciousness as interconnected parts of a single relationship. Phenomenology set out to reconcile empiricism (the world unaffected by thought) with rationalism (factoring out the world leaving only thought). Heidegger (Collinson, 1987) believed that you could not separate knowledge from experience; one could not have had an experience without knowing about it because consciousness was always accompanied by attitude or "intentionality." Phenomenologists (Crotty, 1998) advocated going back to the 'things themselves' in a quest for new and emergent meanings; this could be accomplished if we did not allow the fixed understandings heaped upon the object being studied to interfere with our being able to experience new meanings. In art instruction this was akin to the idea of "total engagement" whereby the student was encouraged to authentically "see" an object or mental image rather than casually "looking" at or thinking about it.

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm had clearly delineated ontological, epistemological, and methodological stances. Ontologically, interpretivist/constructivists were realists; they believed there was a “there, there.” They also felt that multiple

realities could be apprehended and in the real world some things will always remain unknowable.

Epistemologically, they believed that reality (Lather, 1996) was constructed through human interaction and that meaning was arrived at through relationships. Language was an important aspect of this paradigm; reality was a social construction (Lather, 1996), therefore, it was only through language that we could understand how particular individuals symbolically represented their reality.

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm incorporated a wide variety of research methods. They utilized dialectics and hermeneutics, along with observation, interviews, and grounded theory. Through the use of dialogue they sought to distill a consensus among groups and developed a construction that was more informed and sophisticated than any prior constructions. The participants (Lather, 1996) helped to structure the inquiry thus allowing the design to evolve from inside the research itself (emergent design), not from any *a priori* hypothesis. In grounded theory (Crotty, 1998), specific steps were followed in an effort to assure that the emerging theoretical ideas came from no other source than the data itself.

The individual most closely associated with the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was Claude Levi-Strauss. The concept of the *researcher-as-bricoleur* developed by Levi-Strauss (Crotty, 1998) described a researcher who was able to continuously return to and examine the bits and pieces of the research in a new light. Crotty (1998) believed that research in the style of the bricoleur " … invites us to approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new and richer meaning" (p. 51).

Another school of thought that was found within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998) was closely associated with ethnography and involved the aim of the researcher to penetrate a particular culture and view the world through the eyes of the group being studied.

The role of the individual was crucial to the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. The ways in which the individual constructed meaning influenced the knowledge that

was created. Weber (as cited in Crotty, 1998) stated: "… the individual is also the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct" (p. 68).

**Edvard Munch (Interpretivist/constructivist)**

Edvard Munch was an artist who worked in the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. Weber used the term *Verstehen* (Crotty, 1998) to describe phenomenology as an interpretive type of sociology that took into account the individual and his actions as the basic unit. In an epigraph written about *The Scream* (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001), Munch wrote:

> I stopped and leaned against the balustrade, almost dead with fatigue. Above the blue-black fjord hung the clouds, red as blood and tongues of fire. My friends had left me, and alone, trembling with anguish, I became aware of the vast, infinite cry of nature. (p. 927)

Munch's decision to juxtapose the large figure in the foreground of his painting covering his/her ears, with the two figures on the bridge not covering their ears, heightened the uniqueness of the experience - that indeed, the cry was an internal one that was heard by Munch alone.

The fact that Munch chose to make a painting indicated that the entire experience of loneliness and the sunset held a particularly poignant meaning for him. We did not know what meanings Munch put on all the visual elements found in *The Scream*, however he personally addressed his conscious metaphoric use of color in the following diary entry, Munch (Getlein, 2002) wrote, "I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood" (p. 100).

Crotty (1998) felt that epistemologically "constructivism" was a term that should be used to focus on the individual's mind as it made meaning; this was in contrast to "constructionism" which involved the generation of meanings by a group. All meaningful reality (Crotty, 1998) and all knowledge were contingent on human practices having been constructed between an individual and his/her world and shared in a social context. No matter how prevalent the image of *The Scream* had become in the collective mind of our contemporary society, the original experience that generated the meaning

happened to Munch while he was alone - it was a solitary moment. Also, Munch, working in isolation, completed the actual fabrication of the painting.

**Related Studies**

The assumptions of the intended study as outlined in the first chapter were closely aligned with those of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. Prior to outlining the specific research design several studies utilizing interpretivist/constructivist methods and techniques (emphasizing those tending toward the phenomenological) were reviewed.

**Beittel**

Until the 1970s, the behaviorist research method used to study creativity and art processes was by far the most dominant; nevertheless it was not broad enough to entail everything that was actually happening. Beittel sought to resolve the conflict between "objective" behaviorist and "subjective" existential-experiential ways of knowing and understanding. Beittel (1973) suggested: "the aesthetic experience is a psychic reality foremost … we must contend with the psychic reality of aesthetic experience within the artist's stream of consciousness in the unique expressive situation" (p.14).

Beittel (1972) revealed that he felt a change coming in his own research as he began to see that the in-depth study of the individual creative process (an untapped source to date) nevertheless, had the potential to reap valuable insights for art education. In his previous studies, Beittel utilized a nomothetic approach (Allport, 1961) that focused on general laws and patterns that applied to all, or a vast majority of cases. The phenomenological approach that he advocated was idiographic (Allport, 1961) in directing the focus of attention toward the artist and his unique experiences.

Beittel (1973) began a 4-year longitudinal study of individual drawing processes utilizing a phenomenological approach that marked a major shift in art educational inquiry. Participants in the study were undergraduate college students; none were art majors. The setting provided was a drawing laboratory, not an art classroom. Artists came once a week, averaging one to two hours per visit for up to 30 weeks. Students were given the freedom to draw anything they wished, however they could select only

from black and white drawing materials such as pen and ink, charcoal, pencils, and Conte' crayon, etc.

Data was collected in a variety of ways both verbal and visual. While the artists were working, time-lapse photographs were taken at regular intervals by a hidden camera that was mounted overhead. The camera was focused on a front-surface mirror that had been positioned at a forty-five degree angle above the drawing area. Before every drawing session the photographs from the previous session were projected on a wall. No instruction, evaluation or direction was given for the work. Beittel and his assistant, along with the artist, participated in stimulated process recall (SPR). During SPR the evolution of the drawing was reviewed. The artist was asked questions about what had transpired in the drawing at various stages. This data (it would seem by all accounts) was the most important because the artist was retelling, in a *stream of consciousness* (SOC) manner, what actually went on in their psyche during the act of creation.

The researcher was also interested in the drawings as a series - therefore questions concerning the relationship of one drawing to another were also discussed. The combined dialogue of the researcher, the assistant, and the artist in concert created a mediated text of the drawing process known as the "multiple consciousness narrative" (MCN). At this point, numerous sources of data had been amassed including field notes, the taped and transcribed SPR, SOC, and MCN dialogues, and the sequential photographs of the drawings.

Before discussing the interpretation methods used in Beittel's study, it was important to describe the three types of data traditionally used in art research - they were O-data, T-data, and D-data. O-data or operator data (Barker, 1968), wass characteristic of experimental studies whereby the researcher talked to him/herself through constraints imposed on the phenomena by the researcher. According to Beittel (1972, 1973), T-data or transducer-data was created when the researcher, acting as a sensing agent, translated phenomenon as they happen into specific signs (photographs, lab notes, and transcribed interactive dialogues are T-data). D-data, dialogue-data, or encounter-data was not dialogue between individuals, rather, as Biettel (1972) stated: "Art is a genuine dialogue

… we attempt to enter into human dialogue with the artist concerning his artistic dialogue [with the evolving artwork]" (p. 251). D-data was the revelation of the artist creating his/her self-identity in the process of constructing and transforming the work of art.

The process of making a work of art had both overt/external and covert/internal dimensions. The covert dimension could only be studied through indirect means. The overt dimension of creativity could be studied directly through observation, however many of the overt manifestations associated with the creative process required mediation to be comprehensively understood. Beittel invited a noted developmental psychologist to visit the drawing laboratory to observe and record the overt dimension of the artist at work. The psychologist recorded actual phenomenal events in context and noted the artist's posture, reaction to activity in the lab, apparent mood, etc. After several sessions the psychologist noted that the more important events were indeed covert and required mediation. It was quite telling that Beittel (1973) mentioned that the psychologist's observations of overt behavior "were far from useless …they were just not nearly enough" (p.14). Exactly ten years earlier, Harold Rugg (1963) voiced his concern that the kinetic basis for creativity in the visual arts had not been fully explored. I took "kinetic" to mean the overt, visible, and observable movements and gestures made by the artist during the actual process of art production, as well as the less physical and subtle motions associated with contemplation and reflection.

The interpretation of the data by the researcher was akin to the analysis that he had required of the artists in his research study. Beittel (1973) described the likeness:

> There is a way in which the task that is upon me is similar to the task which was upon the artist within the inquiry session in the drawing lab - that is, I am asked now to reflect upon the experience which I had in the drawing lab with the artist and his ongoing series, just as the artist was asked to reflect upon his own ongoing processes of expression. (p. 57)

In Beittel's study, the researcher and his assistants interpreted what they believed the artist was doing in the process of making the pictures and that interpretation in turn was accepted, rejected, or revised by the artist. Questions were then asked about major

choices the artists made in their work and why. Acknowledging the intuitive aspect of data interpretation and concept formation, Biettel (1973) posited: "the process is to penetrate to the descriptive base of events by intuition, by recall of thoughts of the artist, by evidence-sifting - in short, by any means available" (p. 58). The conceptions presented could have been traced back to the original data in a direct manner, thus reflecting a clear correspondence between the data and the resulting concept formation. The concepts derived from the study were particular to the specific case from which they originated; application to other cases would be possible only if they appeared in a number of cases.

Beittel's study provided an intimate, highly complex, and unique approach to the study of the creative process that differed substantially from any that had previously been utilized in art education research. La Pierre and Zimmerman (1997) acknowledged that, "Beittel and his students were the first to publish their phenomenological photographic investigation of and dialogue on creativity with artists in a drawing laboratory" (p. 35). Beittel's study should be applauded for having brought the artist and his/her psyche to the forefront through the use of stream of consciousness recall as a source for data. Additionally, the idea of studying artists outside of a classroom was quite appealing, even though Beittel used a "laboratory setting" which was not selected by the participants of the study.

The study had two limitations that should be mentioned. First was the complete reliance on individuals with little or no art experience as subjects. This led one to wonder if artists with long exposure in the field and countless forays into the creative process used the same or different concepts as those with less experience. Second, the photographs taken while the artists worked consisted of various stages in the evolution of the drawing only. No record was made of the artist actively involved in the process of making the drawings. In contrast, the design of the proposed study utilized experienced artists as subjects working in a natural setting. The use of a video camera provided time-lapse images of the artists at work, as well as a sequential progression of the artwork as it was being produced.

**Gardner**

Gardner (1993) conducted an extensive study of seven creative individuals from different areas of expertise. Picasso was one of those studied. Gardner (1993) assumed, like Galton (1870) many years earlier, that creativity had a hereditary basis. A theory of biologically influenced "intelligences" was developed by Gardner (1993) that included, musical, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinetic, personal, and spacial. Believing Picasso to be a prodigy, Gardner (1993) described prodigiousness in this way, "I believe that a significant genetic or neurobiological component exists in the prodigy: something in the structure or functioning of the nervous system … that made it preternaturally easy to gain initial mastery of the field" (p. 138).

Gardner (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994) believed that in addition to heredity, other factors contributed to the development of a creative individual. In an effort to deal with the complex nature of creativity, he developed a multi-faceted approach that could be used to study various dimensions that existed within each person. Gardner (1993) utilized four principal components in his study of seven creative individuals, including, 1) organizing themes, 2) an organizing framework, 3) areas for empirical study, and 4) emergent themes that Gardner considered "discoveries." The three organizing themes utilized in his study were the relationship between the child and the adult creator, the creator and others, and the relationship between the creator and his/her work.

The organizing framework for Gardner's study (1993) included three aspects, the developmental perspective, an interactive perspective (interaction among individuals, domains and fields), and fruitful asynchrony. Additionally, Gardner empirically investigated the talented individual, his/her domain of expertise, and the field where he/she was judged; their dynamic relationship was revealed as an ongoing dialogue throughout the study.

Each of the seven individuals in Gardner's study (1993) was described separately using a chronological narrative through which data was presented and interpreted. Gardner followed a general timeline, nevertheless, he moved fluidly back and forth

connecting data to events in both the past and future. The narrative was interspersed with historical information and interpretive commentary.

In his study of Picasso, Gardner wove a coherent biographical narrative that utilized threads of both data and interpretation. Data was included from textual as well as visual sources. He referenced texts written by art historians and critics, biographers, articles written for newspapers and magazines, as well as personal letters and journals. Visual data including photographs of the artist and his works were also included. Gardner's story of Picasso was told in a skillful and plausible manner, minimizing the distinction between data and interpretation.

Gardner's study had both laudable qualities and limitations. His research followed a clearly structured, yet flexible design. He allowed for the inclusion of "emerging themes" (prominent concepts discovered during the process of conducting the study), thus avoiding premature censuring of data that might not "fit" easily into the original design.

The emerging themes revealed in Gardner's study include salient cognitive and affective support of the individual at the time of a creative breakthrough and the individual's Faustian Bargain. A crucial piece of information would have been missing from Picasso's narrative without the inclusion of his Faustian Bargain. Gardner's study revealed that when Picasso was 14 years old he witnessed his younger sister Conchita dying a slow, painful death over several weeks from diphtheria. During that time, he promised God he would quit painting if only Conchita would not die. Picasso's bargain was not accepted, thus allowing him the freedom to do whatever he wanted in his professional and personal life. Gardner noted that these "bargains with the divine" occurred in the lives of several of the creators in his study.

Some of the limitations of Gardner's study included the exclusive reliance on indirect sources of data and the development of generalizations based on comparisons of individuals from different domains of expertise. All of the subjects were deceased prior to the time Gardner began his study. He had no choice but to rely on the indirect methods of inquiry noted above. In Picasso's narrative, Gardner referred to preliminary

sketches and radiographic studies (X-rays that revealed hidden images painted over by the artist) associated with the painting *La vie* (1903). He described neither the evolution from the images found in the original sketches to those found in the final version of the painting, nor did he speculate as to why certain images were painted out. He presented this data, but did not interpret it other than to say that these sources revealed Picasso's considerable experimentation in the preparation of *La Vie*. The presentation of data with no attempt to clarify its existence was very troubling. He called on art historians to discuss the data, however, they also pointed to the process of evolution without speculating as to why the changes occurred. If Gardner was afraid of over-speculation, at the very least he could have printed the preliminary sketches so the readers could have made their own assessments.

Another drawback of the Gardner study was attempting to generalize creative concepts across different domains. The concepts derived from a study of an artist might or might not have related to those used in the fields of music, literature, science, etc. I believed it was important to first conduct studies and make comparisons between individuals within the same field before comparing individuals from different fields. The proposed study focused exclusively on individuals working within the visual arts. The artists were studied separately utilizing Beittel's techniques described above, along with the evolving systems approach (ESA) described in chapter two and also in the study by Franklin to follow.

**Franklin**

Franklin (1989) conducted a study of the artist Melissa Zink utilizing the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA). The ESA (Wallace & Gruber, 1989) was an individual-oriented approach that took into consideration the developmental aspects of creative people by examining three subsystems that included organizations of purpose, affect, and knowledge.

The timeframe of Franklin's study (1989) included the four-year period from the time that Zink made the decision to become an artist until her first one-person exhibition (1974-1979). Various data sources and collection methods were utilized including the

researcher's viewing of virtually all art produced during this time period and interviews with the artist. Three series of interviews were conducted, the first were open-ended and conversational, the second included artistic themes that surfaced during the first series of interviews, and third, the researcher offered preliminary interpretations of prior interviews for correction and/or corroboration.

Franklin (1989) utilized the three aspects of the ESA (purpose, affect, and knowledge) in developing and interpreting the questions that she directed to the artist. It was within this system that Franklin sought an interconnection, an evolving system that guided the artist's work. Various dimensions of purpose were revealed through the questions posed to the artist. Purpose was explored as a search for expression and fulfillment of self. The overarching purpose that guided Zink's work was her decision to become a professional artist.

The roles that knowledge and affect played in the creation of Zink's work were also explored. Inquiry was made as to what kind of background knowledge in art Zink possessed, what type of art she started out making once she decided to become an artist, the materials she used, how they were chosen and why, and if the results were satisfactory. Franklin tied prior art experiences and newly acquired artistic expertise (knowledge) to the artist's feelings (affect) and goals (purposes) throughout the four-year journey.

The approach to both interviewing and interpretation was phenomenological because Franklin (1989) attempted to describe the events from the artist's point of view and not her own. Her findings were revealed in a phenomenological narrative. She developed the concept of "converging streams" to describe how the various factors in Zink's work came together to form a working system. It should be noted that even though the narrative constructed by Franklin was directly related to the data and utilized numerous quotes from the artist, nevertheless, it was not necessarily the same story that the artist would have told.

The Franklin study was instructive and innovative in many ways. Her use of the ESA provided a distinctive framework through which the artist's development could be

understood. The phenomenological narrative she constructed offered insights into the extended creative evolution of an artist who was both prolific and committed to the creative process. Franklin presented a theoretical framework for the study of artistic development where none previously existed. According to Bornstein (as cited in Wallace and Gruber, 1989), there was not a "monistic or even prevailing perspective available from developmental psychology that could account for artistic evolution in the individual" (p. 274).

Franklin's study also had limitations. First was the exclusive reliance on the historical perspective. Franklin relied entirely on the artist's memory of experiences and actions that contributed to the finished pieces described in and photographed for the study. This was akin to arriving at a destination without actually experiencing the journey. Certainly Zink was a reliable source of information about her own work, however, her memory of creating the work after it was completed was quite possibly very different from the account she would have given if questioned while actually working on the piece. Many aspects of the creative process were subconscious and/or intuitive and could be quickly lost to memory nevertheless, the power they possessed to influence the direction and outcome of a work of art was potentially enormous.

Another limitation of Franklin's study was in its omission of process observation. The researcher did not include stage progressions (visual or verbal) of any of the works discussed. Had Franklin questioned Zink at various points during the fabrication process, the potential for deeper insights might have been realized. Both the explicit and the more subtle implicit aspects of change, discovery, and influences affecting the creative process were less likely to be revealed (or remembered) after the work was completed and the emphasis was on discussing the finished piece rather than the process.

**Research Design/Metaphor**

Behaviorist research methods or those prescribed by empirical science fell short in promoting efforts to learn about the uniqueness of the individual or the processes that extraordinary artists utilized in their art making. The assumptions and methodologies inherent within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm however, were expansive

enough to form a unique and comprehensive study of the artist's aesthetic experiences. The proposed study emphasized the use of phenomenological and qualitative methods that encouraged insight into the artist's psyche and elucidated factors that instigated, directed, hindered, and/or promoted artistic processes.

Qualitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were suitable for acquiring detailed information concerning phenomena such as emotions, thought processes, and feelings that were not easily studied utilizing more traditional research methods. Eisner (1992) believed that a close tie existed between the values of those working in the arts and recently developed qualitative research methods and techniques that possessed a decidedly phenomenological quality. According to Eisner (1992),

> …qualitative research methods place value on relationships, subtleties of practice, the uniqueness of outcomes, nuance, personal signature, the importance of voice, and the creation of a sense of authorship, and aesthetic crafting of writing that fosters empathy, feeling, and insight. (p. 126)

Several methods, techniques, and themes were chosen for use within this design. The methods included case study, narrative, participant-observer, and micro-ethnography. Additionally, a wide range of techniques were employed including, triangulation, stimulated recall (SR), stream of consciousness (SOC), voice (first person), thick description, reflexivity, introspection, bricolage, and the "image as data."

The methods and techniques listed above were utilized in the examination of five over-arching themes included in the proposed study. Three themes were taken from the evolving systems approach (*purpose, affect, and knowledge*). The fourth, *internal dialogue* was taken from Beittel's work utilizing stream of consciousness recall, and the final theme, was *the artist at work.*

Each theme was examined along three dimensions, historical, developmental, and emergent. *Purposes* were examined in several specific ways including, defining and establishing, life-course evolution, and the role of purpose in art production. *Affect* was studied with respect to motivational factors such as intuition, insight, and inspiration, and their relationship to perception and imagery formation (symbol creation). *Knowledge*

was examined on several levels, acquisition, availability, access, utilization, types of knowledge (personal/professional/artistic), adaptability for image creation, and as a necessary component in aesthetic production. *Internal dialogue* was revealed through artist-researcher dialogues while reviewing stage progression images of artwork. *The artist at work* theme was examined through observation of the artist in the act of creation (via videotape) and the in-concert dialogues resulting between the artist and the researcher concerning both the artist's psychic and kinetic movements during production. The five themes were related one to another in a dynamic rather than static way - that interacted, overlapped, merged, and co-existed. They were to be viewed as energized elements that participated in a vital ongoing dialectic.

The metaphor of an oil painting was quite appropriate in revealing the meshing of methods, techniques, and themes utilized in the intended study. An oil painting consisted of multiple layers. The under-painting was comprised solely of the artist (case study). Placed on top of the under-painting were translucent glazes made from layers of data collected utilizing the ESA (purpose, affect, and knowledge) and through direct observation of the artist involved in the fabrication process. Additional "data-glazes" generated through stream of consciousness recall by the artist in dialogue with the researcher were also applied. The final layer of the painting was the transparent varnish; it consisted of the researcher and the interpretations (narrative/concepts) derived from the data found within the substratum. Interpretation, like a perfectly mixed varnish, was clear, yet durable, allowing light (insights) to penetrate through all the translucent layers down to the under-painting and be reflected back in a transformed state. It provided both unity and cohesiveness without concealing or detracting from what lay beneath.

**3.2 Participants/location of research**

Selection of the artists for my study involved both general and specific criteria. Generally, the participants had to be willing to be analyzed and studied in-depth. Their commitment to a long-term study extending over several years was an essential factor. Their on-going involvement in the artistic processes, along with the creation of a substantial body of work in a particular genre, was a primary consideration. The pleasure

derived from my preliminary research was greatly enhanced because each of the artists selected for the study shared my curiosity about creativity. Specifically, participants were chosen for their unique characteristics described below.

**Professor Vincent Mariani** is a painter and sculptor. He is 76 years old and has been actively creating art for over 55 years. He graduated from the Cleveland Art Institute and has a Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) from Yale. His works have garnered national as well as international recognition. He is currently a tenured Professor at the University of Texas, Austin. He is widowed with two children. I have known him for 31 years.

**Patricia Troth Ricker Black** is a painter, author, and musician. She is 54 years old and has been actively involved in making art for over 35 years. She has a Master of Arts in Creative Writing (MA) from the University of Texas, Austin. She has taught art in a private school, and sells her work through an established gallery. She is married with no children. I have known her for 16 years.

**Noel Robbins** is a painter and musician. He is 32 years old and has been actively involved in making art for 17 years. He received his MFA from the Chicago Art Institute. He teaches at the college level and at a private art school. He has an extensive exhibition record. He is divorced with no children. I have known him for six years. He is the only subject in this study that asked to be included in my research. I agreed because of the high degree of intensity that he brings to his work and his age.

One of the main objectives of my research was to study/observe visual artists at work in their natural surroundings - therefore the location for the research was determined by the individual artist. Preliminary interviews/meetings were conducted in the artists' studios, their homes, offices, art galleries/museums, and restaurants. Future interviews and other artist/researcher dialogues were conducted at locations chosen by the artists. The videotaped sessions of the artists at work were conducted in the artists' studios or at outside locations determined solely by the artist.

## 3.3 Methods of data collection

Creating a work of art involved two types of activities - those that were internal (covert) and those that were external (overt). In the proposed study an "internal activity" need not have had a corresponding physical action; it could have been an impulse, desire, motivation, event, purpose, will, etc. Internal activity necessarily occurred prior to physical action, the assumption being that the artist had to undergo some form of internal activity before manifesting that action into any type of external act no matter how small. Before the physical act of fabrication commenced, internal activity occurred that could not be observed directly. When work began, externalized activities commenced that could be observed directly, however, these too may not have been fully understood without employing indirect methods.

### Internal and External Manifestations

Once the fabrication process was underway, the internal and external aspects of creativity formed a complex, on-going interchange that continued until the artwork was completed. A vast array of methods was required to gain access to the two-fold creative process that was simultaneously an open and closed system. According to Ulbricht (1976), "In phenomenology the investigator assumed that each individual has a unique set of guiding typologies which account for action in specific situations. Thus, the phenomenologists seek diversity of data" (p. 37).

### Data Collection - Triangulation (Oral, Textual, and Visual Data)

In order to conduct a thorough examination of both the internal and external manifestations of the creative process three types of data were collected - oral, textual, and visual. Oral data included three types of artist/researcher dialogues - interviews, stimulated recall, and stream of consciousness. For a detailed discussion of triangulation see "data analysis" section of this chapter.

### Data Collection - Oral (Interviews)

Both formal and informal interviews (Franklin, 1989; Gardner, 1997; Gruber, 1989; Wallace & Gruber, 2001) were conducted at times and places selected by the artists. At the end of each interview, the researcher (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998)

summarized the interview for verification and clarification by the artist; the participants were then given copies of the transcribed interviews for review. The artists were encouraged to write comments about the interview transcripts in a journal for the researcher to read so the accuracy of the artist's comments could be verified.

**Data Collection - Oral (Stimulated Recall (SR) Dialogues)**

Stimulated recall (SR) dialogues (Beittel, 1973) were utilized whereby the artist responded to the researcher's conception of the data obtained from and about the artist and his/her work. The researcher's conceptions, in the form of fieldnotes, were read to the artist at the beginning of each interview and copies were given to the artist for corroboration or revision. This was an on-going verification process that allowed the researcher to validate her interpretations in a regular and systematic fashion, so that the artist's intentions were clarified.

**Data Collection - Oral (Stream of Consciousness (SOC) Dialogues)**

Stream of consciousness (SOC) dialogues (Beittel, 1973) conducted between artist/researcher were utilized. SOC dialogues were generated while the artist and researcher reviewed the videotapes made of the artist during the process of creating. The artist provided an oral account of what he/she recalled was actually transpiring internally and externally. While viewing the tapes retrospectively, the artist was prompted to recall spontaneous actions that were not at all conscious while working. The researcher participated in this dialogue by actively seeking to identify and understand phenomena that promoted major changes and/or movement toward a final resolution in the creative process. She also injected pertinent commentary into the dialogue in an effort to elucidate the relationship (correspondence or divergence) between internal and external processes. Transcriptions of every stream of consciousness dialogue were submitted to the artist for commentary and accuracy verification (member checking). For a detailed discussion of member checking see "data analysis" section of this chapter.

**Data Collection - Textual Data**

The second type of data collected was textual; it was either transcribed to text from another medium or it was in a textual format from its inception (Franklin, 1989;

Gardner, 1997; Glesne, 1999; Gruber, 1989; Mertens, 1998). Data, originally in a textual format, included fieldnotes, artist/researcher journals, and letters, emails, or other written communications between artist and researcher. The artists were asked to keep an "intuition journal" throughout the course of the study in which he/she wrote about particular insights or intuitions that occurred within their artistic process. The researcher developed fieldnotes from the interviews, exposure to the artist's work, and dialogues with the artist. Transcribed texts were created from audio-recorded interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and stream of consciousness dialogues. The researcher also kept a journal describing in detail the concepts emerging from the data and the relationships between those concepts. Copies of the researcher's journal and fieldnotes were regularly submitted to the artists for commentary and verification (member checking). For a detailed discussion of member checking see "data analysis" section of this chapter.

**Data Collection - Visual (Still)**

Finally, visual data, both "still and moving," was collected. Still visual data (Beittel, 1973; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1976; Rugg, 1963) included photographs/slides, taken by the artist and/or researcher of original artwork including both stage-progression images and preliminary sketches. Still visual data also encompassed photographs of "perceptual images." The artists produced "perceptual images" by taking photographs of images found within his/her daily surroundings that elicited an affective response. The artist used a disposable camera, provided by the researcher, in an effort to record perceptions that might offer clues to imagery creation.

**Data Collection - Visual (Moving)**

Moving visual data (Rugg, 1963) included videotapes of the artist at work. Inherent in this form of data collection was a stage-progression of the work being created. Additionally, it recorded the artist during fabrication of the artwork, his/her work environment, and external forces acting upon the creative process. Fieldnotes and researcher journals were utilized in analyzing the videotapes; entries kept by the researcher in these formats were regularly submitted to the artists for confirmation as to

their accuracy. Sullivan (2005) maintained that within the context of research, the visual image could be viewed as a form of raw data possessing the potential to become "evidence" once it was interpreted. There were two unique research methods utilized in this research. First, was the creation of a videotape of the artist during the process of fabricating a work of art; second, was the development of a rubric specifically designed for analyzing videotaped data. A rubric for analyzing visual data was developed by the researcher and submitted to two artists for verification.

**3.4 Methods of data analysis**

The real questions for data analysis were: "How did we come to an understanding of what was before us? And, "How did we learn to see, rather than look?" In both data analysis and in teaching students to draw, a clear distinction should be made between "looking" and "seeing." Looking was a cursory process that required very little involvement on the part of the viewer, on the other hand, seeing was a type of empathic engagement that went far beyond the surface of things, requiring attentive participation on the part of the observer. When teaching life drawing the following exercise helped students to discover the difference. Before beginning to draw, students were asked to study the model carefully in the following manner. They were to walk around the room observing the model from different angles, they were to sit, stand, or recline in the same pose as the model, and they were to analyze the mood that the model projected by taking into account facial expressions and bodily gestures. This exercise was done in an effort to begin the process of moving from superficially looking at the model toward the deeper experience of actually seeing him/her. Throughout the entire drawing process, students were encouraged to maintain this active level of engagement. As in drawing, the researcher benefited from conscious efforts to expand perception and engage more deeply with his/her data.

In conducting a systematic data analysis and interpretation, the proposed study incorporated a wide array of techniques, along with various aesthetic, theoretical, and methodological points of view. Those employed were gathered from a variety of sources. They included - introspection and interactive dialogues in recall of art processes (Beittel,

1972; 1973) and projection of interpersonal modes of knowing on the part of an observer-participant (Franklin, 1989; Gardner, 1993). Additionally, first-person-singular statements of the artist (Gardner, 1993; 1997), reflexivity (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998), and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were utilized.

Figuratively speaking, Beittel (1972) suggested, "We have to enter the dance to experience its mystery, but we have to leave it to describe it" (p. 265). In thinking of data interpretation and analysis in this way, the researcher flowed into, intermingled, meshed periodically with the data, subjects, and the milieu of the artistic process, and then disengaged and stepped back in order to offer a revelatory account.

The process of data analysis and interpretation began the moment the researcher made her first contact with the artist, it occurred at various stages throughout the data collection process, and continued long after the last piece of data was collected. The interactive, on-going, and generative nature of data analysis found elaboration in the following quotation by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). They posited,

> Analysis is less a matter of something emerging from the data, of simply finding what is there; it is more fundamentally a process of creating what is there by constantly thinking about the import of previously recorded events and meanings. (p. 168)

**Data Analysis - Four Stages**

The intended study utilized a four-stage data analysis process. By examining the stages independently, the logic behind the inquiry was revealed. Each stage possessed unique characteristics that were individually identified and described. These stages, however, were meant neither to be viewed as isolated, nor sequential, rather they were to be thought of as inter-connected, ever-present facets of a process that was tightly integrated and dynamic. A continuous back and forth movement between stages was apparent throughout the entire data analysis process as interpretation became progressively more and more focused and precise.

The four stages of data analysis employed in the proposed study included, data preparation, coding and relating structure to process, developing theoretical schemes (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and the creation of a phenomenological narrative (Franklin, 1989). Triangulation of data from multiple sources (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) contributed to the validity of the research findings. The first stage of data analysis involved the three forms of raw data collected throughout the study (oral, textual, and visual). Each type of data was prepared for analysis in the following ways.

**Data Analysis - Stage One - Oral Data**

Oral data, such as interviews (Franklin, 1989; Gardner; 1997; Gruber, 1974; 1978; 1989), and artist/researcher dialogues derived from the artist's videotaped recall sessions (Beittel, 1973), were transcribed and typed for further analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Copies of all transcriptions (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were submitted to the artists for confirmation (member checking) and to colleagues for verification (peer review). For a discussion of member checking and peer review see the "validity" section in this chapter.

**Data Analysis - Stage One -Textual Data**

Textual data, in the form of fieldnotes, the researcher's journal, and interview and dialogue transcriptions (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were submitted to the artists in the study for confirmation and revision (member checking), and to artists outside of the study for verification (peer review). Artists' journals, emails, and other written communication created by the artists (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were submitted for member checking; they were submitted for peer review after receiving participant approval.

**Data Analysis - Stage One - Visual Data**

Visual data, consisting of original artwork and preliminary sketches, were discussed during interviews (Franklin, 1989; Gardner, 1993, 1997; Beittel, 1972, 1973). The interviews were then transcribed and verified in the same fashion as other textual data. Fieldnotes and the researcher's journal (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were given to the artists for member checking and to peers for review. The videotaped sessions of the

artist working in his/her studio were analyzed according to a rubric designed by the researcher and submitted to two artists outside of the study for validation. As with other visual data, analysis of the videotaped sessions in the form of fieldnotes and journal entries were submitted to the artists for member checking and to peers for review (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998).

**Data Analysis - Stage Two - Coding**

The second stage in the data analysis process was coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher's journal contained a methodical description of the coding process used in analyzing all forms of data, oral, textual, and visual. The emerging themes and their relationships were delineated and a clear "trail of evidence" (Glesne, 1999) was established. The researcher's journal (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) was regularly submitted to the artists in the study for confirmation (member checking), and to artists outside the study for verification and commentary (peer review).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "Coding is the analytic process through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory " (p. 3). Initial concepts and themes along with their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were identified through the coding process; interpretation was both objective and subjective; objectively, the researcher extracted, identified, and attentively studied concepts that were grouped into categories and subcategories then linked according to specific characteristics. There was also a subjective aspect to coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as evidenced in the intensive interplay between the researcher and the data. During the coding process, the full force of the researcher's knowledge and experience was brought to bear on the data thus rendering an interpretation that was at once subjective as well as objective.

The coding process was particularly beneficial to the intended study because it offered a systematic procedure for integrating structure and process. Understanding structure (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) revealed "why" but not "how" certain phenomena happened; understanding process told us "how" phenomena occurred but not "why". Categories derived from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) could be analyzed revealing

both the "how and why" dimensions of the phenomenon. One of the main goals of this study was to gain insight into the artistic process in relationship to the structures (psychic, emotional, environmental, educational, cognitive, etc.) that initiated, promoted, or hindered it.

**Data Analysis - Stage Three - Theory Development**

The third stage of data analysis included theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The themes and concepts that arose throughout the research and the evolving theories were documented in the researcher's journal (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher's journal contained a mental roadmap of the thought processes and the evolution of the theories that develop from the data. The evolving theories (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were monitored through the use of member checking and peer debriefing. Dependability and confirmability audits were conducted together to confirm the reliability and objectivity of my findings. According to Mertens (1998), "The confirmability audit can be conducted in conjunction with the dependability audit" (p. 184).

The third phase of interpretation was the most challenging as well as the most exciting. It was the most challenging because clear lines of evidence (Mertens, 1998) must be established between data and theory for any resulting theoretical claims to be academically sound. Establishing a viable connection (Glesne, 1999) was not always easy because researcher bias, prejudices, personal beliefs, preconceptions, and irrelevant information could distort even the richest data. The third phase of interpretation was also the most rewarding because herein lay the potential for thematic integration that enabled links to be forged between data and theory.

Both introspection and reflexivity were in continual use throughout the analytic process - nevertheless, their contributions to the third phase were particularly noteworthy. Utilizing introspection (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1996), the researcher related personal frames of reference to the data in an effort to interpret the phenomenon under investigation. Reflexivity (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) was also employed in comparing and contrasting existing theories (aesthetic, psychological, educational, etc.)

to those emerging from the data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated, "Perhaps the simplest rule for method in qualitative casework is this: Place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on. The brain ostensibly is observational, but more basically, it is reflective" (p. 445).

Supporting evidence for evolving theories was garnered in a variety of ways. Since several layers of interpretation had accumulated by the time theories began to emerge it was beneficial to revisit the raw data (Beittel, 1973). Through a re-examination of raw data (artist's quotations, process recall, events, experiences, visual data, etc,) connections (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that were possibly overlooked during previous examinations might be uncovered. If necessary, additional samples of incidents relevant to the proposed theories could be acquired (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998). And finally (Mertens, 1998), by re-tracing the route between raw data and theory, irregularities in logical transitions could be uncovered. The researcher (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) should have been able to move readily from raw data to concept, to category, to theme, and finally to theory and back again. The journey, no matter how long or convoluted, should have been, in the final analysis, both logical and coherent. The essence of this journey was revealed through the creation of a phenomenological narrative described below.

**Data Analysis - Stage Four - The Phenomenological Narrative**

The final stage in the data analysis process was the creation of a phenomenological narrative. Creation of the narrative was included as part of the data analysis process because it was more than a format for reporting the findings of the proposed study, it was an interpretive activity in itself. The resulting narrative was considered phenomenological in that every attempt had been made to reconstruct and understand events and experiences from the artist's, not the researcher's, point of view (Kvale, 1983: Wallace, 1985). The narrative that emerged is tethered to the recollections of the artist as told to the researcher. Research validity (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) could also be established by the quality of the thick description that was utilized.

The narrative was both coherent and interpretive. According to Franklin (1989), the narrative perspective included a story, comprised of plot, characters, and a description of sequential actions and experiences, that was established by the researcher from data collected from the creative individual. The selection process was crucial in providing unity to what would otherwise have been an isolated set of events. A narrative (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995) was the result of selecting excerpts from the entire body of fieldnotes and journal entries and weaving them into a coherent text that represented an aspect of the world under investigation.

The narrative was also a constructed interpretation. Carr and Kremmis (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) stated, "The researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections, and records, but not necessarily following the conceptualizations of theorists, actors, or audiences" (p. 445). At various points within the analytic process (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the researcher made interpretive choices by selecting or rejecting specific experiences/events to be included in the evolving story; the establishment of relationships and a sequential order for the chosen experiences revealed developing thematic patterns. In the final analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), the interpretive power of the narrative resided in the researcher's ability to discover salient concepts that could be related one to the other and eventually to the overall story.

**Phenomenological Narrative**

Writing a phenomenological narrative included four distinct, yet interrelated processes - they were, the creation of an outline, preliminary draft, reviews (both member and peer), and the final draft. The organization of the outline was reflected in the following discussion. In constructing the narrative (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), first the researcher began by writing an initial statement that included the main idea or thesis and various themes to be developed throughout the story. Next (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), the process of explicating, sequencing, and editing fieldnotes, journals, and analytic commentary promoted the emergence of coherent themes. At this point (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), the researcher presented an intellectual examination of

evidence that revealed the relationship among the themes arising from the fieldnote excerpts, analytic commentary, and the original thesis; as the narrative progressed the original thesis was more fully elaborated and when possible theory was developed. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggested, "Indeed the more precise fuller statement of the thesis is often most effectively presented at the end of the story, in a conclusion to the paper" (p. 171).

From the outline a preliminary draft was developed; copies (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were submitted to the artists in the study and to peer debriefers in an effort to gain valuable feedback, insights, and confirmation. The researcher carefully considered both the comments made by the artists and her peers and she contemplated any and all questions they might have raised prior to commencing work on the final version of the narrative. When the revised narrative was complete the last verification process was conducted; both artists and peers (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were asked to review the final version of the narrative and to validate or dispute my findings.

**Validity - Procedures for establishing credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Glesne (1999), and Mertens (1998) defined and described various ways of establishing validity within qualitative research studies. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated, "Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible?" (p. 393). Mertens (1998) posited, "The credibility question asks if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints" (p. 181). The researcher (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) was able to establish credibility through the use of multiple strategies. Ten verification strategies (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were utilized in the proposed study, they were: 1) Member Checking, 2) Triangulation, 3) Reflexivity/Positionality, 4) Prolonged and Substantial Engagement, 5) Persistent Observation, 6) Peer Review and Debriefing, 7) Progressive Subjectivity, 8)

Dependability, 9) Confirmability, and 10) Transferability - thick description and multiple cases.

**Member Checking**

According to Mertens (1998), member checking was the most important criteria for establishing credibility in qualitative research. The constructs that developed from the research data (Mertens, 1998) should have been verified with the research participants. It was essential (Mertens, 1998) to discuss the data with each participant in the study in order to gain a clear understanding of the phenomenon under investigation so that the researcher was better able to offer a vivid and accurate portrayal of their viewpoints. Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) suggested, "that we may crosscheck our work through member checks" (p. 393). Lorrie (as cited in Glesne, 1999) posited, "To avoid making assumptions I will need to listen carefully and probe thoroughly" (p. 108). I also needed to confirm my findings with the participants throughout the duration of the study.

In my study, member checking was an integral, on-going, and crucial characteristic of the research process. It was utilized continuously throughout data collection, interpretation, and while writing the final report. It was through member checking that I was able to re-affirm and clarify my understanding of the artist's perspectives about their artistic processes. Additionally, member checking or "participant feedback" (Glesne, 1999) offered respondents the opportunity to share in the interpretive aspects of the research study.

Mertens (1998) suggested that member checking could be of two types - formal and informal; my study utilized both. Three examples of informal member checking utilized in my study were - post interview, post videotape review, and post artist-recall session. Following each interview (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) I summarized the notes I had made during the discussion and asked the artist if they accurately portrayed their perspectives.

Another opportunity for an informal member check occurred after I had viewed the in-process videotaped sessions of the artists working in their studios. First, I

reviewed the tapes by myself prior to watching them with the artist. Next, I recounted my understanding of what I was seeing on the tape and asked the artist to verify my findings.

Additionally, a valuable opportunity for an informal member check occurred after reviewing the "artist-at-work" videotape with the participant. We watched the tapes together and the artist related what was occurring throughout the tape. I made notes as he/she recounted what was going on mentally, physically, and emotionally, while at work. At the end of the session a summary of my impressions was read to the artist for commentary.

Formal member checking (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) was conducted utilizing three methods - through interview transcriptions, fieldnote verification, and researcher/artist journal confirmation. To avoid misinterpretation of the participants' commentary derived from the interviews, I sought written feedback on the transcriptions of every interview from each artist in the study. They were asked to write (preferably in a journal that I provided) their comments concerning the transcriptions for me to read. This was possibly less inhibiting for the participants than an oral discussion. He/she quite possibly would write about something that would be uncomfortable for them to tell me to my face.

Another type of formal member checking utilized was fieldnote verification. Typed copies of my fieldnotes from each interview were given to the participants following the interview. This allowed the participants to have enough time to think about my understanding of the previous interview and for them to make notes and/or written comments before the next interview.

Additionally, researcher journal confirmation provided another opportunity for formal member checking. As concepts and themes began to emerge from the interviews and other data, I regularly submitted transcripts of my journal to the artists for review. They were encouraged to write down confirmation or corrections to the concepts/themes and their relationships that I had identified. They were then asked to verify that the

codes, concepts, and connections actually did exist and that my portrayal corresponded with their perspectives.

In addition to formal and informal member checking, the final report was also submitted to the artists for commentary and verification. Submitting working drafts of your research report to the participants could be a time-consuming endeavor. Nevertheless, Glesne (1999) suggested that it could benefit the study in the following ways, "Respondents may verify that you have reflected their perspectives, inform you of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons, and help you to develop new ideas and interpretations" (p. 152).

I submitted drafts of my research report, in the form of a phenomenological narrative, to each artist in the study for verification - once following completion of the rough draft and again after the final draft was completed. I believed that sharing my working drafts allowed both the artists in the study and the researcher to expand our knowledge and insights into the artistic process.

**Triangulation**

Scholars defined and expanded on the importance of triangulation in establishing validity and trustworthiness within a research study. According to Mertens (1998), "Triangulation involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data" (p. 183). Triangulation (Glesne, 1999) could also include multiple investigators and theoretical perspectives in addition to multiple sources and methods. Goetz and LeCompte (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) stated, "Triangulation is the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 443). Berg (as cited in Glesne, 1999) suggested that the reason triangulation was employed was not merely to combine different types of data, but to try and relate them in a compelling manner that would off-set the threats to validity that were associated with each one individually. Glesne (1999) stated, "The use of multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data" (p. 31). Bringing

together data from various sources (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) supported findings and added to the credibility of the study.

Rather than utilize only one technique, the optimal situation (Glesne, 1999) would have been for the researcher to utilize a multi-faceted approach to their data collection. Glesne (1999) presented several suggestions for selecting research techniques, they were - reflect and decide what it was that you wanted to know about before you selected the techniques to use. Additionally, she suggested choosing techniques that would - bring forth data necessary for an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, highlight a new perspective on your topic, and utilize the time available for data collection in an effective manner. Glesne (1999) posited that the three most prominent data gathering techniques utilized in qualitative research were - interviews, participant observation, and document collection. These three techniques were utilized in my study; each was discussed in detail.

**Interviews**

Through the use of multiple interviews (Franklin, 1989; Gardner, 1993; Gruber, 1974; 1978; 1989), I explored each artist's understandings of, and experiences with, their own personal artistic process. The design, philosophy, and questions guiding my research required the active participation of the artists in my study. I was a co-learner and a co-investigator with the participants; this position necessitated the establishment of a relationship based on trust, openness, respect, and rapport. Preliminary research revealed that the artists selected for this study shared my curiosity and interest in the artistic processes utilized by visual artists.

I engaged in four formal interviews that were collaboratively designed and redesigned. The basic question sets (fig. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, & 3.4, pp. 131-134) offered a broad starting point for inquiry. The questions were meant to be flexible; indeed, it was expected that questions would be added to, deleted from, and modified from the ones found in the original sets due to emerging topics and issues that arose after the interview process commenced. It was anticipated that the relationship with the artists would deepen with each successive interview. Additionally, it was hoped that the quality of

information, both questions and answers, would become progressively more informed and poignant as we moved together through the series of interviews.

**Participant Observation**

In order to create an in-depth case study of each artist, I not only interviewed them individually, but also spend time with them in alternative settings where we observed and discussed their artwork. We met in various settings and locations, i. e. in their studios, at exhibitions, art galleries, museums, lecture and slide presentations, discussion groups, and in other unanticipated venues.

I observed the artists in the process of making art (Beittel, 1973). A video camera was employed to create in-process videotapes of the artist-at-work in their studios. This was a valuable tool in analyzing how each individual's artistic process functioned. The videotapes could be slowed down, stopped, and rewound for review and micro-analysis. Environmental factors contributing to, or detracting from, the artistic process were recorded, monitored, and analyzed through the use of the video camera. Also, the physical movements of the artist could be recorded.

**Document Collection**

Several types of documents (Franklin, 1989, Gardner, 1983; 1993; 1997; Gardner & Nemirovsky 1991; Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were collected and analyzed throughout this study, they included - transcripts derived from interviews and videotaped recall sessions, fieldnotes, artist/researcher journals, and both member and peer commentary. Typed transcripts were submitted to the participants following each interview and videotaped recall session. Periodically, transcripts, fieldnotes, and artist/researcher journals were given to both members and peers for verification. They were asked to write responses, comments, and suggestions throughout the study. Responses garnered from members and peers were carefully considered so that I could be as precise and clear in reporting the participant's experiences as possible.

**Reflexivity/Positionality - Researcher Bias**

Glesne (1999) stated, "A reflective section on who you are as a researcher and the lenses through which you view your work is now an expected part of qualitative research

studies" (109). Lincoln (as cited in Mertens, 1998) posited that all research is inherently characterized by the standpoint or position of the researcher. The incomplete nature of all texts (Mertens, 1998) should be acknowledged by the researcher, as they are representative of clearly delineated positions with respect to sexuality, ethnicity, and so on. The texts (Mertens, 1998) generated from research studies were contextual, therefore it was imperative that the researcher thoroughly describe the context of his/her research.

In addition to the necessity of acknowledging context within one's research study, it was also incumbent that researcher bias was addressed as well. According to Glesne (1999), the researcher should have clarified their biases by reflecting upon their own subjectivity and how they will use and monitor it throughout their research. I described my position, the context of my study, and my researcher bias in detail. Additionally, the ways in which I monitored my subjectivity were addressed.

I was exceedingly interested in participating in the search for new insights and a better understanding of how visual artists conceived and developed their ideas and images in the process of fabricating works of art. My role in this study was that of "researcher." Nevertheless, my relationship to the field of art was that of an "active insider." My artistic role was twofold - I was both an artist and an art educator. This long-standing attachment to art has had both positive and negative implications for my research. There were several aspects that should be acknowledged at the outset. My immersion in the field may have drawn me toward data that gave credence to my own hypotheses and preconceptions. My personal understanding of the artistic process may have influenced how I viewed, interpreted, and reported what other artists revealed about their artistic processes. I may have selectively rejected opinions, statements, and experiences that diverged from my own.

My close relationship to art and my personal involvement in the artistic process should also have been considered an asset to this study for a number of reasons. Knowledge of my own artistic process should have provided me with a "baseline" from which to compare and monitor the comments of the artists in my study. Having made art for many years, the milieu of the studio, artist, artwork, and art world was very familiar to

me. It was quite possible that my long exposure to the field of art could lead me to develop sensitivities to nuances within the artistic process that researchers, who were not artists, would not possess. My experience in teaching art has heightened my awareness of "artist process variations" from one individual to another. My expectation was that artists were unique and that divergence from my way of making art was not wholly unexpected, nor offensive to my sensibilities as a researcher. My knowledge of the profession would be helpful in generating valuable questions and assist in data interpretation as well. Exposure to a similar professional background and experiences as the artists in my study, according to Glesne (1999) "will allow for our time to be spent on the rich details of their experiences rather than on a superficial discussion of the profession" (p. 108).

**Researcher Bias**

My attachments to the field of art, my education, social status, race, and my sex (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) were all potential sources for researcher bias. My attachments to the field of art may have led me toward data that supported my personal beliefs about the artistic process. I may have worn blinders, hearing only what I wanted to hear, and saw only what I wanted to see. I may also have found ways of minimizing the comments of my subjects when they differed from my own. Consciously or subconsciously I may have sought to discredit those who disagreed with my analysis of the data. There was also the possibility that I would develop "tunnel vision" based on my background in art, having received the Masters of Fine Arts Degree (MFA) from the University of Texas, Austin. My formal training in art may have hampered my ability to see the value of an artistic process utilized by the artists in my study that differed from the way that I was taught or the way that I worked.

My social status, race, and sex may have also contributed to researcher bias. My middle class background may have influenced the expectations I placed on the artists with reference to attitudes about the work ethic, productivity, and how time was spent in the studio. My race was the same as all the subjects within my study. Two were male and one was female. The influences that race and sex may have played in my research

had not become apparent to me at this point. I was diligent in observing and monitoring any type of biases that might have surfaced in relationship to racial or sexual issues.

**Controlling for Researcher Bias**

Researcher bias was addressed in several ways. I continuously explored and was attentive to my own subjectivity throughout the duration of the study (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998). I began to monitor my subjectivity through the use of a "Progressive Subjectivity Journal" (PSJ). By writing in the PSJ both before and after my interviews and observations, I was able to address pre-conceived opinions, reflect regularly on my subjectivity, and monitor any and all changes. I was also able to identify my subjectivity and acknowledge it as one of the most powerful influences that affected the way I viewed the data being collected. A good faith effort was made to empathize with the artists in an effort to gain an accurate understanding of how they perceived their personal artistic processes. A discussion of progressive subjectivity can be found in the "validity" section of this chapter.

**Prolonged and Substantial Engagement**

The length of time that the researcher spends in the field conducting research was unique to each study nevertheless extended exposure to the phenomenon under investigation could serve to promote the validity of findings. Glesne, (1999) posited that prolonged time in the field enabled the researcher "to develop trust, learn the culture, and check out your hunches" (p. 32). According to Mertens (1998), there was no set amount of time that had been established for a researcher to remain at a site in the field or collecting data. Mertens (1998) stated, "When the researcher has confidence that themes and examples are repeating instead of extending, it may be time to leave the field" (p. 181). Glesne (1999) suggested that it was beneficial to conduct multiple interviews throughout the duration of the study; extending the amount of contact with the participants promoted rapport, and increased both the accuracy of their responses and the validity of the interviews. Additionally, respondents (Glesne, 1999) reflected more thoroughly on their beliefs, emotions, and responses through the process of repeated interviews.

In my study I sought to establish a balance between the length of exposure in the field necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and over-collection of data that was irrelevant or distinctly similar to previous examples and themes that had already been uncovered. It was crucial for me to remain vigilant in the use of procedures used for data collection. Entries in my journal and fieldnotes were made regularly. Data collection was monitor continuously for repetition of themes and concepts. I remained in the field long enough to confirm findings, but not so long as to continue to collect redundant data.

Preliminary research for this study began in the spring of 2000. A large quantity of data has been collected intermittently since that time. In the fall of 2005, I began a research timeline that extended for approximately one year. Contact with the artists in my study for an extended period of time increased the trustworthiness of the findings. During the next year, I conducted four formal interviews along with other additional unscheduled informal interviews and meetings. I also met with the artists to view the videotaped sessions of the work done in their studios. This extensive exposure in the field allowed for the formation of long-standing, productive relationships, characterized by openness, rapport, and trust - all of which contributed immensely to the validity of the study.

**Persistent Observation**

Persistent Observation throughout the duration of this study was beneficial to the researcher in obtaining essential, thorough, and accurate information. According to Mertens (1998), it was important for the researcher to observe the phenomenon in question for a sufficient amount of time so that prominent issues could be identified. Additionally, Mertens (1998) suggested that premature closure, reaching conclusions without adequately observing a situation, should be avoided.

Several venues for persistent observation were utilized in this study. The participants were observed in both formal and informal settings (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998), in pre-planned and spontaneous interviews, in art galleries, museums, in artist/researcher dialogues, discussion groups, and while making art.

One of the most unique types of persistent observation was the videotaping of the artists-at-work in their studios. When utilizing this form of observation it was important to avoid a situation where the artist became inhibited or felt pressure to be doing his/her "best work." Glesne (1999) stated, "It may be difficult to determine whether participants are performing in their best behavior rather than their usual behavior, because people act differently when they are being watched" (p. 33). Use of the video camera for recording the artists working greatly minimized the effects of "best behavior" phenomenon. As the artists continued to use the video camera it was expected that they eventually would become oblivious to its presence and act in a naturally uninhibited manner. When compared to having a person positioned in the artist's studio observing them work, the video camera seemed much less obtrusive. Persistent observation (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) contributed to the validity of the research study.

**Peer Review and Debriefing**

Peer review and debriefing (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) involved the researcher's enlistment of feedback from disinterested colleagues with regard to the interpretive processes used in the study. According to Mertens (1998), peer debriefing included engaging a colleague from outside the study in extended discussions concerning five areas, she identified, " findings, conclusions, analysis, hypotheses, and providing searching questions to aid the researcher in acknowledging their own values and to guide next steps in the study" (p. 182). Colleagues should be asked to assist in the following areas; Glesne (1999) suggested, "by working with portions of your data, developing codes, applying your codes, and interpreting fieldnotes to check your perceptions" (p. 152). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Glesne, 1999) advocated the enlistment of someone outside the study to "audit" your fieldnotes along with the resulting analysis and interpretations.

Peer review and debriefing played an extensive role in my research study. I enlisted artists and/or art educators from outside the study to participate in peer reviews and debriefing. They were regularly asked to discuss and write down their comments regarding both my data analysis and interpretation. Specifically, they were asked to audit

my data, the emerging codes, my coding applications, developing concepts and their relationships, and my analysis and interpretations. They were also asked to check my fieldnotes and journal to verify my perceptions. Copies of the interview transcriptions, fieldnotes, researcher journal, and PSJ were regularly submitted for review throughout the duration of the study. Confirmation of my findings through peer review (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) contributed to the establishment of validity within the proposed study.

**Progressive Subjectivity**

Behar (as cited in Glesne, 1999) reflected, "We cross borders, but we don't erase them; we take our borders with us" (p. 105). Subjectivity (Glesne, 1999) had not been a traditional topic for discussion within research proposals or projects; nevertheless scholars have challenged this practice, noting its influence in the selection of research topics and in the choice of the interpretive framework. Authors, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Wolcott (1995), suggested that if subjectivity was recognized and monitored during the course of the research that it could contribute to the findings.

There were several ways that subjectivity could be utilized as a positive force in conducting research, nevertheless, scholars felt that monitoring its presence throughout the course of the study was one of the most valuable. Glesne (1999) stated, "Reading, reflecting, and talking about subjectivity are valuable, but they are no substitute for monitoring it in the presence of research" (p. 110). Mertens (1998) agreed, "The researcher should monitor his/her own developing constructions and document the process of change from the beginning of the study until it ends" (p. 182).

In an effort to productively monitor subjectivity, researchers (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) should increase their own personal emotional awareness, engage in regular note taking, and participate in peer debriefing. According to Mertens (1998), you needed to be sensitive and attentive to your feelings and emotions and find ways to use, rather than ignore or suppress them. Awareness of your emotional landscape gave you the opportunity to grasp a deeper understanding of yourself and your relationship to your research. Kleinman and Copp (as cited in Glesne, 1999) stated, "Ignoring our feelings is

a work strategy that diverts our attention from the cues that ultimately help us understand those we study" (p. 105). Glesne (1999) advocated exploring particularly strong emotions in an effort to decipher what they could tell us about ourselves and who we were in relationship to our learning process. Through close examination of my feelings I uncovered information about roadblocks that hindered my understanding and detracted from my research.

As another way to monitor subjectivity, Glesne (1999) advocated keeping notes; she suggested writing about strong emotions as they entered your consciousness and then documenting how they affected the questions you asked. Identifying the subjectivities that might be activated in your research (Glesne, 1999) could be anticipated by reflecting on how your research was autobiographical, how it intersected with your life, and why the research questions were of interest to you. Additionally, subjectivity (Mertens, 1998) could be monitored by the researcher through the process of submitting statements of belief to peer debriefers; the peer was then able to challenge the researcher to confront his/her prejudices and maintain an open mind.

There were several ways in which I monitored my own subjectivity throughout the course of the proposed study, they included - an increased awareness of my personal subjectivities, written documentation, and peer debriefing. I increased awareness of my personal subjectivities by actively seeking to identify and describe which subjectivities were being engaged in my research and how they influenced the questions I asked of my participants.

I kept a written account of my subjectivities that was made available for peer review. A Progressive Subjectivity Journal (PSJ) was used to record how and when subjectivities entered my consciousness (Glesne, 1999). I had already begun recording entries in my PSJ concerning strong emotional states relating to my research. During the course of my study I continued to seek out and write about my subjectivities as they impacted the progress of my research. The journal was regularly submitted to peer debriefers for feedback and commentary.

**Dependability (Reliability)**

Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Mertens, 1998) defined dependability as "the qualitative parallel to reliability … reliability means stability over time in the post-positivist paradigm" (p. 184). According to Mertens (1998), change, rather than stability, was characteristic of the constructivist paradigm, nevertheless, it should be monitored, open, and made available for review. Mertens (1998) posited that it was the researcher's responsibility to provide evidence that the information contained in his/her study was trustworthy; in research conducted using the interpretivist/constructivst paradigm, one of the criteria for establishing trustworthiness was dependability.

Scholars offered various methods of establishing dependability in research studies utilizing the interpretive paradigm. Moss (as cited in Mertens, 1998) identified some of the most useful - collaborative inquiry, a transparent trail of evidence, triangulation, and thick description. Collaborative inquiry (Mertens, 1998), both through the use of member checking and peer review, could be utilized to challenge the researcher's interpretations of data and provide support for revisions. Additionally, researchers (Mertens, 1998) could contribute to the dependability of their findings by providing a clear trail of evidence that could be traced to their interpretations.

Several means of establishing dependability had been set in place within the design of my research study, they included, a dependability audit, a clear trail of evidence, member checking, peer review, triangulation, and thick description. A dependability audit could be used to establish reliability within research studies utilizing the interpretive paradigm. Mertens (1998) suggested that a dependability audit be conducted that would "attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process" (p. 184). According to Yin (as cited in Mertens, 1998), the dependability audit for a case study requires detailed documentation for each step in the research process. In creating a dependability audit, I utilized the following questions developed by Schwant and Halpern (as cited in Mertens, 1998), 1) "Are findings grounded in the data? 2) Are inferences logical? 3) Is the category structure appropriate? 4) Can inquiry decisions and

methodological shifts be justified? 5) What is the degree of researcher bias? 6) What strategies were used for increasing credibility?" (p. 354).

A clearly delineated trail of evidence was developed that could be traced from the data to the interpretation. This was achieved through the use of a researcher journal in which I documented emerging codes and concepts, along with their relationships that were derived from fieldnotes, transcribed interviews, artist's journals, and artist/researcher dialogues. Additionally, collaborative inquiry was utilized to establish dependability. I regularly submitted transcribed interviews, fieldnotes, and my researcher journal to participants within the study and to peers outside of the study for verification, commentary, and revisions. According to Mertens (1998), cross-checking of findings helped to eliminate faulty interpretations. Multiple and varied sources of data (triangulation) were utilized such as - interviews, participant observation, written documentation, visual data (both still and moving), fieldnotes, and artist/researcher journals. Utilizing a variety of data sources (Mertens, 1998) enhanced the reliability of research findings.

Thick description was established through the use of various descriptive sources of data - oral, textual, and visual. Multiple interviews, fieldnotes, artist/researcher journals, and artist's recall sessions of videotaped work sessions added depth and richness to the researcher's descriptions. When creating the final report, I was able to offer a vivid portrayal of the context in which the artistic processes took place through the use of thick description. This enabled the reader to garner an authentic understanding of the artistic setting and gain a true sense of the artistic processes employed by each participant in the study.

**Confirmability (Objectivity)**

Confirmability, according to Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Mertens, 1998), was the qualitative equivalent of objectivity. Mertens (1998) stated,

> Objectivity means that the influence of the researcher's judgment is minimized.
>
> Confirmability means that the data and their interpretations are not figments of the

researcher's imagination. Qualitative data can be tracked to its source, and the logic that is used to interpret the data should be made explicit. (p. 184)

Additionally, Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Mertens, 1998) suggested that a confirmability audit be conducted for two reasons - to establish a clear line of evidence between the data and its original source, and as conclusions were developed, that the process of data consolidation could be confirmed.

There were two ways that I established confirmability within my research study. First, I combined a confirmability and dependability audit. Mertens (1998) stated, "The confirmability audit can be conducted in conjunction with the dependability audit" (p. 184). The questions suggested by Schwandt and Halpern (as cited in Mertens, 1998) for conducting an audit for reviewing qualitative research studies were listed in this chapter in the previous section under the heading "Dependability (Reliability)." Those same questions were utilized in the creation of a consolidated dependability/confirmability audit. The second way that I established confirmability within my study was by submitting fieldnotes, researcher journal, transcriptions, etc. to members and peers for review in an effort to ascertain whether or not the interpretations and conclusions I had reached were supported by the data.

**Transferability (thick description and multiple cases)**

Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Mertens, 1998) posited that there were two ways within the constructivist paradigm to view each case or process under examination, first, specifically as a unique phenomenon, and second, as an example of a general class. It was incumbent upon the researcher (Mertens, 1998) to offer enough detailed information about time, place, and culture in order to avoid confusion concerning the contextual variables affecting the setting that were particular to the study. Stake (as cited in Mertens, 1998) also placed responsibility on the reader who was expected to be able to make general assumptions from the case in point to their own personal experiences. Mertens (1998) stated, "Guba and Lincoln label this type of generalizability "transferability" (p. 225).

Both the researcher and the reader possessed responsibilities in reference to transferability. The reader (Mertens, 1998) must evaluate to what an extent the study site and his/her receiving context were similar. In order for the reader to make this determination, the researcher (Mertens, 1998) offered contextual details in the form of thick description. Mertens (1998) stated, "The researcher emphasizes the total context in which the research took place to enable the reader to make judgments as to the transferability of the study's results to their own situation" (p. 5). Rawlings (as cited in Glesne, 1999) stated, "A person may learn a great deal of the general from studying the specific, whereas it is impossible to know the specific by studying the general" (p. 153).

In my study, transferability was promoted through the use of thick description and multiple case studies. According to Geertz (as cited in Glesne, 1999), theory building proceeded by thick description. Thick description was defined by Denzin (as cited in Glesne, 1999) "description that goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act (thin description), but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations, and circumstances of action" (p. 22).

The proposed qualitative research study included an in-depth examination of the context of the artistic processes of three visual artists. Qualitative researchers (Glesne, 1999) sought to describe and analyze the complexities of individual cases that highlighted concepts not previously noted or fully appreciated. I incorporated a broad spectrum of methods over an extended period of time within a natural setting. Thick description was achieved through the use of a variety of data collection methods including, multiple interviews, participant observation, videotaped sessions, artist/researcher journals, and extensive fieldnotes. Additionally, the final report, in the form of a phenomenological narrative, included an abundance of thick description that provided an accurate depiction of the artistic processes as described by the participants in the study. This approach offered the reader a clear window through which to view the artistic process of each participant. It also enhanced the reader's ability to establish correspondence between their situation and the findings derived from the study.

In case study research, Yin (as cited in Mertens, 1998) suggested that the use of multiple cases could strengthen the validity of the results. Three case studies were conducted within the design of the proposed study; the use of multiple studies enhanced the transferability of the research findings. A detailed discussion of case studies can be found in Chapter IV.

## Limitations of the Study

Designing and conducting the flawless research study in either education or psychology (Mertens, 1998) was impossible, therefore, it was essential for the researcher to identify and describe the limitations of their study. Glesne (1999) stated, "Part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study" (p. 152). The researcher (Glesne, 1999) was charged with conducting the best study possible under the specific constraints imposed by his/her circumstances; offering a detailed discussion of the study's limitations offered the reader a basis for understanding the situation surrounding data collection, analysis and reporting.

Several limitations of the proposed study have been identified, including - accomplished artists as participants, natural setting, willing participation, videotaping restrictions, time constraints, and cancer. First, my study investigated accomplished artists rather than art students. Inquiry was not made into the ways that individuals learned to use basic artistic techniques, concepts, or materials. This study focused on identifying and describing the processes utilized by professional visual artist in fabricating works of art. It was possible that much of what proficient artists did was subconscious, therefore problems associated with conscious awareness and recall of subconscious actions and motivations may hinder the search for insights and a better understanding of their artistic processes.

The second limitation of the proposed study was the use of a natural setting. My study examined the personal artistic processes utilized by working professional artists as they lived, were inspired, and created works of art in their own unique environment. Research was not conducted in a school setting or a laboratory studio. Challenges may have arisen from working within a natural setting such as - identifying and describing the

number of variables affecting the artist's work. Also, determining which aspects of the artist's environment contributed to, or detracted from their work may have presented yet another obstacle. Although this research was not be conducted within a classroom setting, knowledge and insights that were acquired would allow art instructors to incorporate a broad array of potential approaches and responses to the artistic processes identified within the classroom setting.

The third potential obstacle to the proposed study was the willingness of the participants. The artists selected were extremely receptive to participation in this research study. Their willingness could present a limitation. It was quite possible this group of artists might have possessed characteristics and artistic processes that were radically different from other accomplished artists not wishing to be observed, analyzed, or studied.

The videotaping process may have presented drawbacks to my research. Participants in this study were asked to videotape themselves while working in their studios or other workspaces. I was limited to examining the particular pieces of artwork that the artist chose to work on in front of the camera. It was also possible that the artist might accidentally have forgotten to turn the video camera on at different times while working. This would have created gaps in the sequential documentation of their working procedures and loss of potentially valuable research data. There was also the chance that the artist might not become accustomed to the presence of the video camera and opt out of using it entirely. Also, there was the possibility that the piece he/she began working on will not be completed within the established research timeline, thus delaying the analysis and writing phases of my study. I have allowed extra time within the overall schedule to accommodate for this eventuality.

Time constraints placed on the participants had the potential to limit and/or complicate this research study. Two artists in the study were active college art instructors; one was a full-time professional artist. Each had pressing commitments that placed restrictions on their time. Due to their full schedules, gaining access for interviews, meetings, and member checking maybe compromised. These artists were

regularly involved in making works of art therefore they had the potential to possess a heightened awareness of their own artistic processes. The time spent with them was rewarding, even though scheduling presented a formidable challenge.

I would be remiss in stating the limitations of my study without having included a discussion of the effects of cancer. Every aspect of my life - my family, my art, my teaching, and likewise, this study was impacted by cancer. Eight months ago, my teen-age daughter Lynne' was diagnosed with cancer (Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma, ALCL), a rare form of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. She underwent numerous surgeries, procedures, blood transfusions, tests, and chemotherapy treatments. Her chemotherapy treatment continued through December of 2005.

The painful nature of cancer, along with the brutal, but necessary medical treatment, wore heavily on all members of my family - in particular Lynne'. In addition to the physical stress, enormous emotional, mental, and financial challenges accompanied our struggle with this long-term, life-threatening disease. At this point in her treatment, Lynne' is doing well. Recent scans have not indicated the formation of new tumors, and her prognosis for recovery is optimistic.

The stresses of helping my child in her battle with cancer undoubtedly impacted my research in some way. Lynne' was involved in extensive chemotherapy and other time-consuming and emotionally draining procedures that affected my concentration and the amount of time available for work on my research study. On a more positive note, since my daughter's diagnosis I came to think about life differently - I appreciated what could be taken away more poignantly than ever before. I would like to think that this experience increased my sensitivity toward the participants, thus improving my ability to empathize with the artists, and, if used wisely, these attributes could have enhanced every phase of my research study.

**Timeline**

The timeline for data collection was two-tiered. The first tier consisted of scheduled interviews between the artist and researcher. The second tier was the "in-process" videotaping of the artist at work and the follow-up sessions. A precise timeline

for conducting the interviews had been developed, however a schedule for in-process videotaping sessions could not be established until first meeting with the artist and determining when he/she was ready to commence work on a new piece. In an effort to videotape the production of one major piece, or a series of smaller pieces, the goal was to establish the starting point for new work(s) at the earliest possible point during the study.

The first tier of data collection included four scheduled interviews to be conducted over a six-month period with two-month intervals in between. The interviews began in September 2005 and continued until the end of February 2006. Prior to each interview the artist was given a list of questions. During each interview the artist was asked to discuss his/her current work and its relation to past and/or potential work in the future. (fig. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, & 3.4, pp. 131-134).

The first interview was conversational and general in tone however, specific background questions were asked about art, education, and life history. Themes and images contained in completed works were discussed. The second interview involved a discussion of the first serious interest in the visual arts and factors that influenced the decision to become an artist. Early themes utilized in the artist's work were explored. The third interview examined the artist's professional life. Themes found within recently completed works were discussed and their relationship to past visual themes was examined. Motivational factors were identified and described. The fourth interview focused on ways that the artist transferred themes into the visual imagery found in the finished work of art. Factors that contributed to or hindered the creative process were discussed. In the final interview the artists were given the opportunity to talk about anything affecting their work that they felt should be included, elaborated on, or revisited from previous interviews.

Overlapping the interview timeline was the second tier of data collection composed of videotaped sessions of the artist in the process of making a work of art and the associated follow-up sessions. These activities were scheduled at the earliest point possible in the study and were completed no later than August of 2006. When the artist was ready to commence work on a new piece, a video camera was positioned in his/her

studio in such a manner that both the artist and the work of art were clearly visible. The artist was asked to turn on the camera each time that work was done on the piece. Upon completion, the researcher reviewed the tape and wrote fieldnotes.

Once the work of art was finished and the videotaping sessions ceased, an audio-recorded follow-up session was scheduled. This session involved participation by both the artist and researcher. First the researcher presented her fieldnotes to the artist who corroborated or corrected the findings. Next, together the researcher and the artist reviewed the videotape of the work as it was being produced. At this point, the artist provided a stream of consciousness description of what his/her thoughts, emotions, and actions were at the time the work was being created. The researcher asked questions in an effort to clarify any aspects of the creative process that seem unclear. Finally, the follow-up session was transcribed.

Member checking and peer reviews were scheduled throughout the duration of the study. They included examinations and feedback on the following items - interview transcripts, videotape dialogue transcriptions, researcher fieldnotes and journals, and working drafts of the final report. A dependability/confirmability audit was conducted prior to the creation of the final report.

In conclusion, multiple case studies, in-process examination of the artists at work, the creation of a phenomenological narrative, and extensive procedures for establishing validity, credibility, and trustworthiness, combined to form an innovative, comprehensive, and informative methodology for the study and interpretation of the artistic processes utilized by three visual artists.

**Figure 3.1**

**Interview #1 - Questions**

**I. Life History/ Childhood**

1 - A. When/where were you born?
1 - B. Where did you live as a child?
1 - C. What was your family like?
1 - D. What size family did you have?
1 - E. What professions do/did your parents have/had?
1 - F. Did you live with both parents?
1 - G. Do you have siblings?
1 - H. Did you have a pet?
1 - I. Where did you go to school?
1 - J. What type of activities did you pursue? Hobbies?
1 - K. Were you involved in sports?
1 - L. Did you play a musical instrument?
1 - M. Did you undergo a traumatic event as a child?
1 - N. Were you healthy/sick as a child?
1 - O. What is your first memory?

**II. Early Art Experiences**

2 - A. Is anyone in your family an artist?
2 - B. Did anyone in your family teach you about art?
2 - C. Were you exposed to art as a child? Museums, galleries, prints?
2 - D. Did you make art as a child?
2 - E. When did you begin to make art?
2 - F. Did you study art formally as a child? In school? Private lessons?
2 - G. Describe your early art experiences?
2 - H. Describe your subject matter (imagery)?

**III. Current Work**

3 - A. At the end of each interview the artist is given the opportunity to discuss what he/she is currently working on and encouraged to tie the imagery found in this work to previous pieces and to possible future works.
3 - B. Inquiry is made as to when he/she will be starting a new piece that could be videotaped.
3 - C. He/she is also asked to make journal entries about their experiences with *intuition* as it relates in any way to image formation and art production. (Each artist is given a blank journal by the researcher).
3- D. He/she is asked to take photographs of anything in the environment that you encounter to which you have a noticeable emotional response. (Each artist is given a disposable camera by the researcher).

**Figure 3.2**

**Interview #2 - Questions**

**I. Life History/ Adolescent/ Early Adulthood**

1 - A. Where did you go to high school?
1 - B. Did you study art in high school?
1 - C. Did you make art on your own during high school?
1 - D. Describe the art you made in high school?
1 - E. Where did you get ideas for your art?
1 - F. Was there anyone who encouraged your art in high school?
1 - G. Did you attend college? Did you study art?
1 - H. Are you married? Do you have children/grandchildren?
1 - I. Did you make art during your early adulthood?
1 - J. Was there anyone who encouraged your art as a young adult?
1 - K. At what point did you know you wanted to be an artist?
1 - L. Can you describe the factors that influenced your decision to become an artist?
1 - M. Did you undergo any tragic events during young adulthood?
1 - N. What type of friend did/do you have?

**II. Media/Work Environment**

2 - A. What type of materials do you use?
2 - B. Do you work in more than one visual medium (painting/sculpture)
2 - C. Do you work in mixed media?
2 - D. Do the materials you use affect your images?
2 - E. Do your materials derive from the image?
2 - F. Do your images derive from the materials?
2 - G. How do you determine your working environment?
2 - H. What are your working requirements for space and materials?
2 - I. Describe your working environment.
2 - J. Do you work in isolation or surrounded by others?

**III. Current Work**

3 - A. Give an update on your current work - tie your current imagery to what you did before - is this work moving in a new direction? How has your imagery evolved? - how does your current work relate to possible future works?
3 - B. I want to collect your "intuition journal" - we will discuss your journal at the next interview.
3 - C. I will develop your photos and we will discuss them next time.

**Figure 3.3**
**Interview #3 - Questions**

**I. Professional Life/Adult Personal Life**

1 - A. Describe your professional life as an artist?

1 - B. Did/do you have someone who acte/acts as a mentor?

1 - C. Describe the purposes (goals) you have for your artwork.

1 - D. Do you participate in any other artistic activity outside the visual arts?

1 - E. Do you see a relationship between your work in the visual arts and other art forms with which you are familiar?

**II. Artistic Process**

2 - A. Do you see your artistic process as having an observable form or phases? Explain?

2 - B. Does your artistic process stay the same from one piece to the next?

2 - C. Describe your creative process in relationship to one particular piece of work. Be as specific as you possibly can - include internal and external influences - cognitive, sensory, environmental, intuitive, etc.

2 - D. Have you ever felt that your creative process is unique or are aspects of what you do similar to what other artists have experienced?

2 - E. Have you shared with other artists the workings of your artistic process?

2 - F. Have you thought, wondered, or written about your creative process?

2 - G. How do you feel during the creative process?

2 - H. Do you ever experience frustration during the artistic process, if so, how do you deal with it?

**III. Imagery Characteristics**

3 - A. Do you know where the imagery for your work originates?

3 - B. Describe the onset of imagery in your work?

3 - C. Before or during the creation of a work of art do you have a complete image of the finished piece in your "mind's eye"?

3 - D. Do you feel your images are set from the very beginning, or do they evolve while you are working?

3 - E. Do you try to control your visual images so that they confirm to a "pre-set image" you have in your mind?

3 - F. Do your images have a purpose of their own beyond your conscious awareness?

3 - G. What part, if any, does sensory perception, imagination, intuition, emotion, or cognition, play in the formation of visual imagery in your work?

3 - H. Do the formal elements of art ever come into conflict with your visual images?

3 - I. What do you do it the formal elements come in conflict with your imagery?

**IV. Follow-up data collection, interpretation, and dialogue.**

There will be a discussion about the journal entries on intuition and the sensory photographs collected at the last interview. The in-process videotaping session will be discussed and hopefully scheduled. Current work is discussed.

**Figure 3.4**
**Interview #4 - Questions**

**I. General Questions on Creativity/Inspiration**

1 - A. Can you define creativity as a known phenomenon that you have experienced?

1 - B. Reflect on the idea of "inspiration" or "imagination" as it relates to your imagery.

1 - C. Does “art-making” fulfill a need in your life? Explain?

1 - D. Is there a "uniqueness of experience" associated with each piece that you make? Explain?

1 - E. When you work do you feel there is a "climactic point" within the process where you see a distinct turning point in the piece?

1 - F. How do you feel when making art? Transformed? Liberated? Satisfied? Conflicted?

1 - G. Are you aware of the "passage of time" when you are working?

1 - H. Does your work have a sense of purpose?

1 - I. Why do you make works of art?

1 - J. Do you consider the creative act to be an "essential or non-essential activity" for your existence and well-being? Explain?

**II. Evaluation and social aspects of creativity**

2 - A. For you, is communicating with others through your art important?

2 - B. Do you consider communication an important part of making art?

2 - C. Would you consider a work of art that did not communicate to others to be a failure, even though the piece resonated within you as a valid visual statement?

2 - D. Have there been any artists that you have admired who did not communicate successfully with society?

2 - E. Have you developed a set of criteria for evaluating your artwork? Explain?

2 - F. If you have developed a set of criteria, is it based on internal, external, or a combination of the two?

**III. Implications**

3 - A. What conditions support artistic creativity?

3 - B. Can we create environments, institutions, and situations that can foster creativity?

3 - C. If possible, how would you recommend we go about dong this?

3 - D. Are there individuals, institutions, or agencies that might foster or hinder creativity?

3 - E. Speak from your personal experience about times when you felt your creativity was being promoted or downgraded.

**IV. Final Thoughts**

Read back to the artist any answers from previous interviews that seemed unclear and in need of clarification. Additional questions that arose after this initial list was compiled should be asked. The artists are given the opportunity to ask questions.

## Chapter IV

### 4. Significance of the Study

4.1 Findings of research studies derive their significance from the context of previously conducted investigations. How will your findings contribute to the existing literature? What findings do you anticipate and to what extent do you expect to generalize from the results? What educational implications do you expect to make based on your findings? Why should anyone be interested in your findings?

### 4.1 Combining Cognitive Case Studies and Process Examination

This study should be viewed within the context of specific cognitive case studies and research inquiries that emphasized process examination. Inclusion of both approaches provided the foundation for a comprehensive study of the creative process.

Acknowledging the unity of cognition and sensory experience within the individual, Dewey (1934) stated, "There are no intrinsic psychological divisions between the intellectual and the sensory aspects; the emotional and ideational; the imaginative and the practical phases of human nature" (p. 247). In accordance with Dewey's assessment, two different approaches to visual arts research had been brought together to form the contextual basis for the proposed study. The research literature did not include a study in which the cognitive case study and process inquiries were intrinsically combined.

Independently, studies emphasizing the cognitive case study or process examination had been conducted; several should be noted for their contributions to this study. First, were the cognitive case studies conducted by Franklin (1989), Gardner (1983; 1993; 1997), Gardner and Nemirovsky (1991), Gruber (1974; 1980; 2001), and Wallace (1982; 1989); second, were studies emphasizing the fabrication process conducted by Beittel (1972; 1973), and Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1972; 1976).

### Neglect of Sensory Aspects of Experience/Knowing

Exclusive reliance on cognitive approaches fostered neglect of the sensory aspects of experiencing and fabricating works of art that were essential for a comprehensive understanding of the creative process. Dewey (1934) echoed these sentiments:

> The trouble I find with the representative and cognitive theories of the esthetic is that they, (like the play and illusion theories) isolate one strand in the total experience, a strand moreover, that is what it is because of the entire pattern to which it contributes and in which it is absorbed. They take it to be the whole. Such theories either mark an arrest of esthetic experience on the part of those who hold them, or they are evidence of forgetfulness of the nature and actual experience (emphasis added) in favor of enforcement of some prior philosophical conception to which their authors have been committed. (p. 290)

I sought to describe the significance of a powerful sensory episode that impacted my aesthetic sensitivity. Garrett Bowman (2000) recalled:

> **Ephatha (1959) -** *Ephatha* is an Aramaic word; translated into English it means, "to be opened to all possibilities."
>
> My life really began when I was eight years old. It was a summer night when I first heard whispers from the implicit realm. Early on, the evening promised to be no different from many others that had been so neatly folded away and forgotten like the clean towels in my grandmother's linen closet. I spent every summer with her until I went off to college. But this night had intentions of its own; it was to claim me forever.
>
> The corner room in the front of my grandparents' home was mine. It had large windows on two sides. The windows were covered with what my grandmother was so proud to call her "sheers" – actually they were long panels of diaphanous fabric. Tonight as I lay in bed, I am thinking about the hot August day, the watermelon fight, and how mad Ross' mom had been when I hit his clean white shirt with that big juicy red watermelon heart! Lost in my own prankish thoughts, I was totally unprepared for what was to happen next. A sudden flash of dazzling light appeared. It was as though I had always been blind and in total darkness for my whole life, and now I was being introduced to the light for the first time. The light burst in again; it moved and jumped, then it faded quickly away.

> Had it been here before and I just missed it? Now it came again. I was afraid because the light was so big, yet I was slowly being overcome with curiosity. Even though I was witnessing the waxing and waning of headlights from cars moving along the street outside, none of my fascination was diminished. These uninvited beams made their way mysteriously across my plain walls, engulfing my ordinary things, and emblazoning my all too familiar room, gradually transforming it into a living, pulsing, abstract design. My unexceptional room was somehow becoming exotic and fathomless; it had never before been either. Progressing at its own speed, each golden headlamp created a unique pattern of light and shadow that softly touched the bed and crept gently over my covers. Its invading brightness seemed so spontaneous, yet so calculated, as it swept across the contours of my body … alas, I was no longer a spectator but a participant in this ethereal transformation. Motionless, I lay transfixed with wonder, waiting for the sound of the next approaching car, signaling that soon these magical rites would begin again.

This was my ephatha experience. The word "ephatha" captured the profoundness of my first contact with heightened perception and sensitivity. It was an experience that seemed to penetrate the physical world and tap into another, deeper dimension. The experience was also characterized by a strong awareness of the significance of what I was encountering. Even then I somehow knew that it was very important, it would be many years before I would begin to truly understand why. Looking back, it appeared that it was at that moment and through that specific experience in my bedroom that I was given a particular type of sensitivity, one that I would carry with me throughout the rest of my life. (Journal Entry, April 2000)

The challenge then was to create a seamless research design that moved fluidly along the continuum from internal to external examination and back again.

By combining the cognitive case study perspective with the "in-process" approach, both internal and external manifestations of creativity could be examined as components of a dynamic and thoroughly integrated system.

**Case Study**

The power and richness of the individual case as a source for scholarly inquiry was reflected in the following commentary taken from Doctor Zhivago (as cited in Wallace & Gruber, 1989), Pasternack stated:

> To run true to type is the extinction of a man, his condemnation to death. If he cannot be assigned to a category, if he is not a model of something, half of what is needed is there. He is still free from himself, he has acquired an atom of immortality. (Preface, p. v)

The importance of the unequivocal case study to the proposed inquiry could not be overestimated. Gardner and Wolf (1994) posited that if we were able to explain the uniqueness of individuals clearly considered creative we would have a degree of confidence that our model was accurate. The opposite obtained if we developed a model for ordinary creative individuals; it was possible that an unambiguous case may have functioned in a way that was qualitatively different than a standard case.

This study should be viewed within the context of the following case studies (previously discussed in Chapters II & III) conducted by Gardner (1983), Gardner and Nemirovsky (1991), Gruber (2001) and his associates using the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA), and Franklin (1989). One of the aims of the ESA and other cognitive perspectives was to garner an understanding of unequivocal instances of creativity through case study analysis. Purpose, affect, and knowledge (hallmarks of the ESA), along with other manifestations of creativity, were productively examined by way of the intensive study of an individual life. The case study was chosen because of its integral position within the ESA, and also for the following distinguishing characteristics. Wallace and Gruber (1989) characterized case study - one individual was studied and various discrete areas of the person's life and work were brought together for examination. The researcher sought to understand the individual in a holistic manner,

emphasis was placed on the formation of insights into the progression and development of the work itself, and the elaboration of a psychological theory of creative work was a goal of case study research.

Additional information regarding the case study perspective was provided by Stake (as cited in LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997), "The individual is viewed in all his/her personal and social complexity" (p. 35). The researcher (Stake, as cited in LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997) began with a search for understanding of the intricacies of an individual case, then broadened the focus to include additional interrelated components; as the study progressed, issues may have emerged as particular classifications or appeared as contingencies. For example, categories may have appeared as artists described "internal" sources of imagery, such as dreams or imagination, or an "external" source such as a sensory perception. Other issues may have appeared as contingencies, for example, an idea, image, or preliminary sketch would not have been developed unless it possessed an emotional dimension or a motivational component.

**Process**

Studies of creativity within the visual arts have been conducted utilizing a multitude of different approaches - each contributed immensely to our understanding of this complex human endeavor. Researchers, nevertheless, had primarily focused on the thoughts or personality of the artist, his/her social cultural, educational, political milieu, completed works of art, and to a far lesser degree on the fabrication aspects of the creative process itself. Lamenting the lack of process examination in creativity research Gruber (2001) stated: "Despite the copious and burgeoning research literature about creativity, there is and has been singularly little direct study of how a creative person actually does the work for which he or she is recognized" (p. 346).

In addition to cognitive case studies of creative individuals, the contextual basis for the proposed investigation also included research that focused on the fabrication processes utilized in art production. Emphasizing the importance of "in-process" research Refsum (2002) said:

> Artists and the field of visual arts deal primarily with what happens before artworks are completed, this is their specialist arena, what comes afterwards is the arena of the humanistic disciplines. If the field of visual arts wants to establish itself as a profession with a theoretical framework it must build its theory production on what happens before art is produced, that is, the processes that lead to the finished objects of art. [emphasis added] (p. 7)

Concentration on the active production of art (Beittel, 1973) had been neglected in research conducted in art education, in the literature on the psychology of art, and in the area of aesthetics. Beittel (1973) stated: "I will not impugn all existing efforts to study other aspects of art, but I will call into question their failure to live up to the promise of giving us greater insights into the art process itself " (p. 3).

**Research Context**

The proposed study was situated within the context of a drawing study conducted by Biettel (1973). Specific aspects of the Beittel study had been selected and others rejected for inclusion in this inquiry. The most salient features adopted for use were the time-lapse photographic recording of the artist at work, along with the artist/researcher dialogues concerning the images being created using stream of consciousness recall. Additionally, allowing the artists to select their own subject matter had also been adopted.

Aspects of the Beittel study that were rejected included the choice of a laboratory setting rather than a natural setting, the narrow restrictions placed on the artist's materials (only drawing media were allowed), and finally, the exclusive reliance on non-artists as subjects.

Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) concurred with Beittel concerning the dearth of "in-process" research available on the active production of art; they posited that even though there were an abundant number of studies that examined why individuals made art there were relatively few that examined how art was made. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) stated, "Systematic observation of the creative process itself, of what the artist actually does, has largely been neglected" (p. 3).

According to Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976), psychoanalysis had focused on the unconscious motives that influenced the creative process in relationship to the individual, whereas sociology had concentrated on the forces affecting the creative process and the influence of creativity on society. Additionally, it must be noted that art education and psychology had emphasized behavior and trait oriented research over process examination.

Along with the Beittel study (1973), the proposed inquiry was situated within the context of a drawing study undertaken by Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976). Some aspects of their research design were included within this study, however others were not. Features adopted for this study included, the close examination of pre-drawing and "in-process" behaviors of the artists, the stage-progression photographs of the artist's work, and the follow-up interviews.

Other aspects of the study were rejected including, the use of an experimental classroom setting, severe limitations on materials (only dry drawing materials were provided), the objects to be drawn were part of a cache that had been pre-selected by the researchers, and lastly, the subjects were students rather than accomplished artists.

Both of the process studies described above utilized a laboratory or experimental studio setting rather than a natural setting, i.e. a location selected by the artist in which to work. One of the main considerations of this study was that artists be examined making art in a natural setting. The effects of a laboratory setting upon the artist's work could not be determined therefore its potential for altering thoughts and/or actions proved sufficient for disqualification.

**Natural Setting**

Several reasons obtained for the insistence on a natural setting. The artist's milieu was important to the success of the creative process. Artists chose to work in various settings for particular reasons - they worked in studios, workshops, garages, kitchens, offices, out-of-doors, in-doors, etc. A key component in our understanding was to view the artist working within an environment of his/her own choosing. By observing the artist in his/her natural workspace, insights were garnered concerning the inter-action

between artist/setting and the influences, both positive and negative, that the setting exerted on the creative process.

**Findings Anticipated**

The findings anticipated from this research fell within three categories - they were image/idea generation, intuition/cognition unification, and art production. Specific strategies were identified that artists utilized in formulating, discovering, and selecting images/ideas, i.e. locating image/idea sources, discerning between images/ideas chosen for development and ones that were rejected and thus never realized.

**Images**

The varied ways in which artists utilized images/ideas provided us with an opulent and informative resource for creativity inquiry. Picasso and Beethoven both discovered and developed numerous ideas as well as retaining them for long periods of time. Amazingly, eight notebooks devoted entirely to Picasso's preliminary sketches of the first Cubist painting, *Les Demoiselles*, 1907, have only recently been discovered. These revealed Picasso's countless efforts at modifying, fracturing, and reassembling the human form in search of a new type of artistic expression (Gardner, 1993). Beethoven (Hamburger, 1952) revealed the complexity of image/idea production:

> I carry my thought about with me for a long time, often for a very long time, before writing them down. I shall not forget a theme even years later. I change many things, discard others, and try again and again until I am satisfied; I begin to elaborate the work … the underlying idea never deserts me. I hear and see the image in front of me from every angle … (p. 194)

**Intuition/cognition Unification**

It was also anticipated that findings would be made with regard to intuition/cognition unification. It was assumed that both intuitive and cognitive processes played important roles in determining creative outcomes. It was expected that techniques and strategies would be identified and described that facilitated the integration of intuitive and cognitive ways of knowing utilized in artistic processes.

Interplay between cognition and unconscious manifestations could have facilitated creative processes. Dewey (1931) described the "pervasive quality" of a situation as one that occurred when a distinctly experiential phenomenon directed the more cognitive aspects of knowing. The true beginning of the creative process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) was when ideas or emotions arising from the unconscious combined with reason; at this point they were named, classified, and ultimately related to other ideas and emotions. Cognitive theorists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994) also posited that vigorous ideas, when not censored by consciousness could and did surface in new and creative ways.

A powerful image formed in the mind of the German chemist August Kekule' when conscious and unconscious processes were brought together. Kekule' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) envisioned the ring-shape of the benzene molecule following his experience of falling asleep while watching sparks in his fireplace make circles in the air.

**Art Production**

Finally, it was anticipated that findings would be generated concerning art production. Working procedures, strategies, and environmental influences would be identified and comprehensively described through microanalysis. It was through attentive observation and empathic examination of the artists at work that the potential for discovering new dimensions of the creative process would be realized.

In regard to process, Picasso emphasized the importance of the preliminary steps involved in creating a work of art. In preparation for *Guernica*, 1937, Picasso numbered and dated approximately 45 sketches; reflecting on his process (Gardner, 1994), Picasso said:

> [All of my paintings] are researches … there is a logical sequence in all this research. That is why I number them. It's an experiment in time. I number and date them. Maybe one day someone will be grateful. It is not sufficient to know an artist's work - it is necessary to know when he did them, why, under what circumstances … Someday there will undoubtedly be a science of man - which

will seek to learn about man in general through the study of the creative man. (p. 175)

**Qualitative Case Study**

The proposed research was comprised of a qualitative case study of one visual artist (see amendments, p 228). It utilized a rigorously systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting phenomena relating to the process of making works of art. Like quantitative research (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997), it began with empirical observations of a specific phenomenon, however the data that was retrieved was interpreted quite differently. In qualitative research (Willis, 1978), directly observed comparisons were based on logical inferences that produce new understandings and a re-ordering of previously held insights, instead of utilizing stringent numerical categories and comparisons. The use of a qualitative format (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) enabled theory to be generated that would deepen our insights and broaden our understandings, rather than allowing for generalizations to have been formed about them.

**Meaning Generation**

Instead of attempting to generalize from insights derived from the limited set of individuals comprising this study, comparisons would be generated among the three styles, along with concepts and theories relating to how artists work. Intuition and insights (Beittel, 1973) garnered from individual case studies could not be generalized, however, they could form a foundation for future inquiry - possibly producing generalizations that could be logically defended.

Interestingly, Beittel drew comparisons between the way meanings were generated from qualitative case study research and from reading a biography or an autobiography. In both scenarios (Beittel, (1973), we learned about life and its dynamics through an intensive examination of an individual; in each case the authors assumed a specific stance toward their data that placed boundaries on the approach and at the same time allowed for meanings to be generated. Additionally, complex phenomena was conceptualized and represented by the author's selection and interpretation of specific events. Insights realized in both case study research and biography/autobiography

pointed toward particular individuals. It was nevertheless true (Beittel, 1973), "that commonality within the human race can be found; we share many things, we sense, even in the portrayal of a unique life something that bridges our differences, a 'type' that informs our lives in a broad and pervasive sense" (p. 70).

**Educational Goals**

The proposed study addressed the following educational goals described by the NAEA (1996). They were (as cited in LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997): "Decoding belief systems and values, as well as the history of ideas which shape contemporary practice, seems critical if we are to better understand teacher preparation, conceptual issues, contexts, curriculum, instruction, student learning, and assessment" (p. 183).

**Implications for Education**

The implications for education that were expected to be made, based on findings from this study, were in the following areas: imagery formation and realization, cognitive, intuitive, and sensory integration, and bridging out-of-school/in-school art practices. Insights garnered concerning the formation and realization of artistic images would offer art instructors new methods and techniques for assisting students in creating and developing imagery within their work. This research sought to uncover working habits, thought processes, and environmental factors that promoted or discouraged image formation. No attempt (Rugg, 1963) had been made in the behavioral sciences or in the arts to integrate psychological and physiological concepts with findings established in philology, mythology, and philosophy of the symbol, or to symbol-formation data collected by various psychiatrists. In academic areas other than the visual arts knowledge about symbol formation would provide teachers with useful techniques for teaching students to think abstractly and to visualize ideas that could not be expressed verbally or in a textual format.

Concepts and theories arising from this study would reveal ways that accomplished artists integrated logic, insight, and sensory perceptions to facilitate and motivate their art production. This researcher, along with numerous others, (Arieti, 1967, 1976; Franklin, 1989; Freud, 1909; Gruber, 2001; Havelka, 1968; Rugg, 1963) have long

felt the need for an examination of how these aspects of the psyche work together to form a creative individual and creative products. Those who design curriculum and teach within the visual arts would benefit from a better understanding of how artists utilized and coordinated the various aspects of knowing - cognitive, intuitive, and sensory.

This study focused on identifying ways that the rational and unconscious areas of the mind worked in tandem to produce innovative concepts. The dream, or any other unconscious manifestation (Feldman, 1994) was useless unless it connected with the rational, conscious work of the mind that purposefully sought to solve a problem; the whole mind was pulled together in such a way that new and useful things would be created. Rugg (1963) lamented, "For a generation we have given lip service to ideas of 'the whole man' and the 'complete act of thought,' but few of us have put the full scope of the available concepts to work. We have used only half of mind and dealt with less than half of man" (p. xvi).

**In and Out-of-school Art**

This researcher acknowledged a gap between art produced in a school setting (school art) and art created outside of school (out-of-school art). The pressing need for confronting and seeking means to bridge the space between the two was addressed by this study. Art students in a classroom setting were constrained by teachers, materials, space, and assignments, over which they exercised little, if any control. This research provided a naturalistic look at how artists worked outside of the constraints found within a school environment. The ways that artists found/discovered their visual problems, selected the materials with which they would work, and fashioned their working environments were analyzed and described.

Classroom instruction could be enhanced by a better understanding of what artists did within their chosen environments. There was a difference between in/out-of-school art, and of necessity the difference would always remain to some extent. Even though a classroom was a contrived setting where students make art, this did not mean that ideas and techniques garnered from out-of-school practices could not be integrated into school art pedagogy. Art instructors, curriculum designers, and ultimately students would

benefit from insights derived from this study. Suggestions were presented for integrating out-of-school, student-driven ways of working with the more rigid teacher-controlled curriculum that persisted within many art classrooms.

Over the past 30 years Wilson (1974, 2005) had advocated for the inclusion of out-of-school art practices within the school art curriculum. His interest was sparked when he discovered J. C. Holz. In 1974 Holz was an energetic ten-year old who drew profusely, crafting highly original comic book characters for long periods of time each day. This type of self-directed art production (Ulbricht, 2005; Wilson, 2005) offered an alternative to the prescribed and regimented design/technique-oriented artwork that continued to be promoted in schools. Wilson (2005) continued to elaborate the benefits of combining out-of-school with in-school practices to produce what he termed the "third pedagogical site" (p. 1).

**Incomplete Knowledge Foundations**

The findings generated from this study would build upon the current, yet incomplete, foundation of knowledge available within the areas of image formation/development, cognitive, intuitive, and sensory integration, and the bridging of in and out-of-school art practices. In the area of image formation/development one needed only to examine the plethora of creative products and discoveries emanating from the arts and sciences to realize the potential value of expanding this knowledge base.

Within the visual arts, the image could not be separated from the completed art object. Imagery was an inherent part of all works of art. Whether originally sensed, felt, imagined, or discovered, the image must, by definition, be made physical in order for an art object to come to fruition. There were artists who created a clear progression of their imagery as it developed (an "image-trail"), whereas others did not. Michelangelo was known to have burned his preliminary sketches, therefore eradicating the link between the original image and its final form in the sculpture or painting. Likewise, image production had played a decisive role in scientific creativity. Several notable examples included - Darwin's "branching tree" diagram, the only illustration in *The Origin of the*

*Species* (Gruber, 1981), the double helix configuration of the DNA molecule, and Kekule's benzene ring formation.

**Integrated Ways of Knowing**

Findings derived from this study would be of value to those seeking to educate the whole person by combining cognition, intuition, and sensory perceptions. The methods employed in this research were designed to reveal the innovative and productive nature of integrated ways of knowing. As the world was faced with new and evermore complex problems, the need for creative solutions required that we brought to bear the full resources of the individual. This entailed expanding our knowledge base to include not only cognitive, but also intuitive and sensory ways of understanding. Rather than "no child left behind," a more inclusive and emancipating motto for education would be "no mode of knowing left behind."

The following statement by R. D. Lang emphasized our neglect of integrated ways of knowing (as cited in Pinar, 1975):

> Our time has been distinguished more than by anything else, by a drive to control the external world, … and by an almost total forgetfulness of the internal world. If one estimates human evolution from the point of view of knowledge of the external world, then we are in many respects progressing. If our estimate is from the point of view of the internal world and of oneness of internal and external, then the judgement must be very different. (p. 396)

**Expanding Art Education**

In regard to building bridges between in and out-of-school art practices, the findings derived from this study would be valued by educators, students, and others seeking to develop an art education that were truly emancipating. Free and unencumbered aspects drawn from the artist working in a naturalistic setting could be carried over into the classroom, thereby improving the student's creativity and ability to adapt to the environment beyond the classroom.

The walls of the traditional classroom had been crumbling for sometime due to the introduction of the inter-net and its associated means of virtually instantaneous

information transfer. Now more than ever, technology allowed us to access, utilize, and integrate out-of-school art practices into the curriculum in ways that were both relevant and intellectually stimulating. Beyond the classroom digital environments, cultural collaborations, and community-based opportunities all created new places for creative and critical inquiry (Sullivan, 2005; Ulbricht, 2005).

Additionally, those who sought to promote student-centered methods of learning would find the observations derived from this study to be innovative and challenging, yet practical in their application. This study built on Wilson's work of integrating visual culture into the classroom to create a democratic educational environment. Wilson's concepts of heuristic learning, like those found within this study were under-girded by theories found within the Reggio Emilia educational phenomenon. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (as cited in Wilson, 2005) characterized Reggio Emilia:

> Pedagogical work as co-construction of knowledge and identity and opening up new possibilities for democracy [which] can be viewed as contributing to the exercise of freedom, understood in a Foucauldian sense as being able to think critically, to think opposition, to promote "reflective indocility" - and by so doing to take more control of our lives, through questioning the way we view the world and increasing our ability to shape our own subjectivity. Thinking critically makes it possible to unmask and free us from existing discourses, concepts, and constructions, and to move on by producing different ones. (p. 79)

**Sources of Research Design**

Though firmly based within the time-honored traditions of the fine arts and art education, the unique research design, the questions, methods, and avenues of inquiry pursued in this study arose from my own personal and professional experiences as an artist and as a visual arts educator. They were the result of unsolved problems, unresolved conflicts, contradictory beliefs, and perceived gaps in knowledge that stifle the progress of teaching and learning. They also developed from my own transforming experiences in making works of art and the resulting curiosity about how best to transmit

my knowledge and awareness of those experiences to students. In advocating a more expansive and comprehensive research ideology, Sullivan (2005) suggested:

> … to embrace the interconnections between human systems of mind and matter requires a view from up close and from afar - and scientists know this as much as artists. Therefore, unless research traditions continue to expand in scope and method the arts and sciences will remain caricatured in their own way, with both the scientist and art enthusiast seen as experts that continue to know more and more about less and less. (pp. 121-122)

In order for progress to be made it seemed essential that art educators and researchers remained open to new discoveries and productive ideas. At the same time they must also maintain a critical approach in evaluating procedures, practices, and beliefs from the past, continuously rethinking their use in the present, and remaining ever diligent in assessing their potential utility for use in the future.

# Chapter V

## Noel Robbins: Introduction

## Approach to Study: The Phenomenological-Narrative Perspective

The following statement offered a poignant entrée into the mind of the painter Noel Robbins. Reflecting on the cycle of creative change and accompanying frustration that has fueled his artistic work, Robbins recalled:

> With the studio work though - for years now it's been a problem, the abstract work and the realistic work going in either direction, being pulled back and forth, pulled back and forth, right? - for years … things that are constantly confusing and painful, you know, it's going to become obvious at some certain point in time that this is not a direction you want to go in, or keep going in, if it's going to be that painful. (Interview. March 11, 2001. Audio Tape 13-A, Log [005])

### Artistic Change

The creative work of any visual artist would, over time, undergo change. Change exists on a broad continuum from slight and almost imperceptible, to traumatic, disruptive, and even life altering. It was not the presence of change, rather it was the nature and impetus, viewed in concert with the outcomes of a specific transformation that have continued to mystify and intrigue us.

Various sectors of academia have identified and described occurrences of change in the artistic works of creative individuals. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable dearth of documentation with respect to analytical procedures and interpretation available on the subject. Franklin (1989) posited:

> Art critics and art historians, as well as psychologists, trace lines of development in artists' work, identify periods marked by changes in style or subject matter, and

> attempt to discern sources of change. Dramatic shifts in style or mode of work, the apparent sudden appearance of a stream of new ideas and marked increase in level of energy and productivity are not uncommon in narratives of artistic work. Yet relatively little attention has been devoted to analyzing such phenomena. (p. 255)

**"Shifting Focus"**

In this narrative, attention was focused on Robbins's artistic development and works created between 1991 and 2006. During this period, Robbins continually alternated between the painting styles of realism and abstraction. I examined how these changes in style resulted in the creation of new works that were innovative, critically viable, and personally satisfying to the artist. When Robbins switched styles, experiences embedded in the process of painting realistically were carried over into his abstract work, and vice versa. I argued that these changes were generated by substantial psychic and physical energy that controlled Robbins's artistic production by instigating, halting, and/or sustaining his creative process. It was also posited that Robbins's artistic redirections were the result of prior and ongoing emotionally charged states that set in motion his compulsion to enter into the act of creating. It was through this cyclical process of switching from realism to abstraction, and back again, that the requirements of his compulsion found their fulfillment. In an effort to identify, describe, and account for Robbins's unique alternating pattern of change, the concept of "shifting focus" was developed.

**Unique Interest**

The unique interest of this case resided in Robbins's alternating cycle of creativity. His artistic development was prompted by stylistic changes fluctuating between the dual pivot points of realism and abstraction. Rather than traveling along a single path in a linear direction toward a specific goal, he gained momentum by shifting back and forth from one style to the other; some shifts brought artistic growth and productivity, while others resulted in frustration and despair. By maintaining his position within this unique cycle, Robbins has enabled himself to forge works of art that,

dialogued with art history, interfaced with contemporary pieces done by other artists, and resonated with his intense aesthetic urge to make art. The formation, nature, and description of Robbins's artistic cycle of creativity were the focus of this narrative.

## Methods and Techniques

Qualitative research methods were employed in the development of Robbins's narrative for a variety of reasons. Strauss and Corbin (1998) posited that qualitative techniques were suitable for acquiring detailed information concerning phenomena such as emotions, thought processes, and feelings that were not easily studied utilizing more traditional research methods. Eisner (1992) believed that a close tie existed between the values of those working in the arts and recently developed qualitative research methods and techniques that possessed a decidedly phenomenological quality. According to Eisner (1992),

> … qualitative research methods place value on relationships, subtleties of practice, the uniqueness of outcomes, nuance, personal signature, the importance of voice, and the creation of a sense of authorship, and aesthetic crafting of writing that fosters empathy, feeling, and insight. (p. 126)

Various methods and techniques contributed to the development of the phenomenological narrative. The methods included: case study, participant-observer, and micro-ethnography. Additionally, a wide range of techniques were employed including, triangulation, thick description, reflexivity, introspection, bricolage, stimulated recall (SR), stream of consciousness (SOC), voice (first person), and the "image as data."

## Time Frame and Approaches to Study

Utilizing both general and specific approaches, this narrative offered a comprehensive view of Robbins's artistic development. A broad biographical background was coupled with a detailed examination of Robbins's artwork created during the past 15-year period. The in-depth analysis began in 1991 with the first appearance of two distinctly different styles (realism and abstraction), and concluded with the completion of a major abstract painting in the fall of 2006.

The empirical data of this study was comprised of 17 audio-recorded interviews, five videotaped "in-process" paintings that documented the artist-at-work, journals (artist and researcher), fieldnotes, still photographs, and viewing of the majority of Robbins's artwork completed during the last seven years.

**Interviews**

Initially, a series of four scripted interviews were conducted (Questions, fig. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, & 3.4, pp. 131-134). These interviews targeted specific areas of interest such as, childhood, life history, education, mentors, professional life, and discussions concerning the means of transforming ideas into visual imagery. The 13 remaining interviews delved into the nature of Robbins's artistic production, shifts between realism and abstraction, and the factors influencing his movement from one style to the other.

**Journal Entries**

It was important to note that Robbins kept an extensive personal journal, writing almost daily, with few exceptions, between March of 2000, and August of 2006. His journal entries offered an enhanced understanding of the interviews and artwork concurrently being produced. Robbins's written text, while extraordinarily rich in detail, also provided the opportunity to establish a broad overview of his mental and emotional states throughout the entire seven-year span of my research.

Journal entries were autobiographical in nature. Through the process of writing regularly in his journal, Robbins was able to construct both an authentic and expansive view of himself from a uniquely internal vantage point. Dramatic self-revelations, vivid portrayals of inner turbulence, and the longing for artistic progress, offered receptive readers psychological insights into their own interior landscape. Gusdorf (as cited in Wallace & Gruber, 1989) saw autobiography as: "… a work of art, and at the same time a work of enlightenment; it does not show us the individual seen from outside in his visible actions, but the person in his inner privacy, not as he was, not as he is, but as he believes and wishes himself to be and to have been" (p. 39).

**Time-lapse Videotapes**

The most unique data collected during the course of this study were the five time-lapse videotapes of Robbins engaged in the act of painting. Micro-analysis of the videotapes revealed stage progressions of five categories characteristic of artistic production. The categories were: *the formal visual elements* (composition, technique, and color), *content* (imagery, i.e. recognizable objects/amorphous shapes), *personal body language* (gesture, attitude, and posture), *environment* (surroundings), and finally, *external forces* (any influences acting on the production of the work of art). Each of these five categories was included in a rubric designed by the researcher specifically for videotape data analysis. The rubric was submitted for peer review and member checking prior to its implementation.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

A four-stage data analysis procedure was utilized throughout the seven-year study of Robbins's artistic work. The procedure included: 1) data preparation, 2) coding and relating structure to process, 3) developing theoretical themes (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and 4) the creation of a phenomenological narrative (Wallace & Gruber, 1989). At each stage throughout the analytical process, the data, along with developing interpretations, were submitted for peer review and member checking. A detailed discussion of the oral, textual, and visual data analysis procedures is contained in Chapter III, (pp. 104 - 107).

**Data Preparation**

The first stage of analysis involved preparation of the three types of research data.
1) **Oral Data** - (interviews) First, the 17 audio-recorded interviews were transcribed (typed word for word), next, they were indexed (given a sequential numerical designation and dated).
2) **Textual Data** - (data already in a textual format, i.e. journals, fieldnotes, and personal correspondence) Textual data was originally typed and/or photocopied, then indexed.
3) **Visual Data** - (still photographs and videotaped images of artwork) Visual Data was described (written down in a textual format), and then indexed.

A detailed description of data preparation is found in Ch. 3, (pp. 99-101).

**Data Coding/Concept Formation**

During the second stage of analysis, all the various forms of data were coded, the emerging themes, concepts and relationships were delineated, and a clear "trail of evidence" (Glesne, 1999) was established. The concepts surfacing throughout the study of Robbins's artistic work were analyzed with reference to five over-arching themes. Three themes were taken from the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA), they are, *purpose, affect, and knowledge*. The fourth, *internal dialogue* was taken from Beittel's work utilizing stream of consciousness recall, and the final theme was *the artist at work*. The five themes were related one to another in a dynamic, rather than static way - interacting, overlapping, merging, and co-existing. They were viewed as energized elements participating in a vital ongoing dialectic. An extensive discussion of concept formation is found in Ch. 3, (pp. 105-106).

**Theory Development**

The third stage of data analysis included theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theories emerging from the concepts and themes arising throughout the research (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were documented in the researcher's journal. These journal entries provided a mental roadmap of the thought processes and the evolution of the theories that developed from the data. For a detailed discussion of theory development see Ch. 3, (pp. 106-107).

**The Phenomenological Narrative**

The final stage in the data analysis process was the creation of a phenomenological narrative. Creation of the narrative had been included as part of the data analysis process because it was more than a format for reporting the findings of this study, it was an interpretive activity in itself. The resulting narrative was considered phenomenological in that every attempt had been made to reconstruct and understand events and experiences from the artist's, not the researcher's, point of view (Kvale, 1983: Wallace, 1985). The narrative that emerged was tethered to the recollections of the artist as told to the researcher.

The narrative was both coherent and interpretive. According to Franklin (1989), the narrative perspective included a story, comprised of plot, characters, and a description of sequential actions and experiences, that was established by the researcher from data collected from the creative individual. The selection process was crucial in providing unity to what would otherwise have been an isolated set of events. A narrative (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995) was the result of selecting excerpts from the entire body of fieldnotes and journal entries, and weaving them into a coherent text that represented an aspect of the world under investigation.

The narrative was also a constructed interpretation. Carr and Kremmis (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) stated, "The researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections, and records, but not necessarily following the conceptualizations of theorists, actors, or audiences" (p. 445). At various points within the analytic process (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the researcher made interpretive choices by selecting or rejecting specific experiences/events to be included in the evolving story; the establishment of relationships and a sequential order for the chosen experiences revealed developing thematic patterns. In the final analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), the interpretive power of the narrative resided in the researcher's ability to discover salient concepts that could be related one to the other and eventually to the overall story. For further discussion of the phenomenological narrative see Ch. 3, (pp. 108-109).

## Chapter VI

## Noel Robbins: Biographical Background

Three years ago, Robbins penned this reflection of a vivid childhood memory in his journal, he wrote:

> Tonight, in reading about artist Victor Willing, I realized, like he did when he came back to art after a 20-year hiatus, that the reason I make paintings and drawings is to recapture the magic that it originally brought to me as a child. My brother and I, when I was about three or four would draw a skull in the dirt with a stick, run around the garage, jump the fence, and back, to mess up the skull - erasing it, and then do it over again. We would do this repeatedly. (Journal Entry. February 22, 2004, p. 5-A)

Memories of the wonder and excitement derived from playful childhood experiences continued to open the doors to Robbins's imagination. Notable vestiges of play and humor consistently emerged in the paintings and drawings Robbins created during the past 15-year period.

### Creative Life Chronology

Noel T. Robbins was born December 22, 1968, in Austin, Texas; he was the middle child - having an elder brother and a younger sister. He has lived most of his life in Austin, except for the three years he spent in Chicago while attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) - see Creative Life Chronology, (fig. 6.1, pp. 233-237).

### Parents

Robbins had unique memories of each of his parents. Throughout his childhood Robbins's mother was a bountiful source of care and encouragement. He recalled, "She made us [the three children] believe in ourselves" (Interview. March 16, 2000. Audio

Tape #10-A, Log [265]). In recent years, Robbins noted a disparity between his mother's values and his own. His personal response to her expectations were revealed in the following journal entry, Robbins reflected: "I love her more than life, but sometimes she makes me feel stupid by the way she looks and responds to my dreams. Like, when I mention a way of life that is without marriage, and/or children. She lives in a teeny tiny little insular world where there are no alternative ways to marriage and children" (Journal Entry. May 8, 2006, p. 82). Nevertheless, these many years hence, his mother has remained an active and enthusiastic supporter of Robbins's creative endeavors - evinced both by her purchase of art supplies, and her regular attendance at exhibition openings.

Robbins's father was of a distinctly different temperament. He was noticeably reserved in his expressions of affection. Robbins remembered: "My dad was somebody to always hold back compliments. It was the insecurity … he just couldn't bring himself to say "what a good job"' (Interview. March 16, 2000. Audio Tape #10-A, Log [260]). Robbins perceived the strain of continually seeking, but never quite gaining, his father's approval as a source of deep and unresolved conflict.

**Early Interest in Art**

Though emotionally distant, Robbins's father was not oblivious to his son's early and intense interest in art. His father recounted an early indication of creativity, Robbins recalled: "My dad told me that as a child, I just loved to sit on the floor and color in coloring books. Even long after the other children had gone outside to play; I would sit and continue to color. I was completely content and engaged in what I was doing. This would go on for hours" (Interview. Feb. 25, 2000. Audio Tape #3-A, Log [077]). Maintaining intense focus on the artwork at hand greatly enhanced Robbins's ability to remain artistically productive throughout his life.

**Magic Tricks and the Picture Plane**

For several years, Robbins was interested in learning to perform magic tricks. He established a parallel between magic and painting. Robbins explained:

> I think there is something about the representation of space in a painting that is thrilling. It is kind of like magic. When I look back as a kid, when I was in the

> fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, and even a little bit in seventh grade, I'd gotten involved in doing magic shows - little magic tricks. One of them I remember vividly was really wonderful, was two matchboxes, and they were separate, but connected with a little fish line that you couldn't see. You could separate the matchboxes in your hand and when you'd push one drawer open the drawer in the other one would open too; it was a neat little trick! With painting, what I am leading into is, the representation of space is very kind of magical, because, particularly in the Modernist Dialogue, artists who are dealing with the flatness of the picture plane and space - like Ce'zanne - that's when it really becomes a thrill, because you have this wonderful feeling of this real space that is an illusion, but then you also keep being reminded of that [flat] surface and it's magical. There's something magical about that. (Interview. Mar. 11, 2001. Audio Tape #13-B, Log [234])

**Percussion**

From an early age, Robbins expressed an interest in percussion. While in kindergarten, he recalled wanting to learn to tap dance. He referred to tap dancing as, "playing the drums with your feet" (Interview. Mar. 16, 2000. Audio Tape #8-A, Log [322]). During the fifth grade, Robbins began to play the drums. Throughout high school, he played the drums in the marching band, as well as in the concert and jazz bands. He continued to play the drums as an adult. The rhythmical characteristics and improvisational possibilities associated with playing the drums were echoed in the myriad shapes, forms, and images comprising Robbins's abstract paintings and drawings.

**Divorce**

When Robbins was 12-years old, his parents divorced. While he admitted that this was a traumatic childhood event, nonetheless, he was cautious about citing their divorce as the cause of his own problems as a youth. He stated, "Even the troubles I had when I was in the pre-teens and the teens were not, I don't think, were necessarily tied into their being divorced" (Interview. Mar. 11, 2000. Audio Tape #5-A, Log [110].

## Drawing and Work Ethic

Robbins's artistic work was influenced by two events that occurred while he was still in high school. First, it was at this time that he began to make drawings with a social purpose. Second, the foundation of his personal work ethic began to surface. During high school, Robbins drew caricatures of his classmates in a variety of comical situations. He received support and positive feedback on the humorous nature of his sketches. Indeed, the cleverness of his images contributed to his elevated position on the high school social ladder. At this time, he viewed drawing as a means of socially interacting with other people and establishing friendships, rather than a serious artistic endeavor.

It was also during high school that Robbins's work ethic first began to form. In addition to the rigors of homework and band practice, he began working in a tuxedo rental shop. He continued working at this same job until completion of his undergraduate degree. Beginning in high school, a strong sense of financial responsibility played a prominent role in controlling both the time and energy Robbins allocated to his creative work.

## Austin Community College

During the spring of 1987, Robbins graduated from Reagan High School. The same year, he began taking courses at Austin Community College (ACC). While attending ACC three important events transpired: Robbins made the far-reaching decision to become an artist, he began developing personal criteria for evaluating his own artistic works, and he encountered his first memorable artistic inspiration as an adult.

## Career Decision

Robbins had no formal art instruction prior to registering for a drawing class at ACC in the fall of 1987. Remembering how much he enjoyed making caricatures in high school, Robbins decided to begin his study of art with a class in Life Drawing instructed by David Elliot. In this course he studied human anatomy; he made drawings from the human skeleton, as well as from live models. Robbins became so intrigued with drawing that he signed up for Life Drawing II with Minnie Miles. It was during this semester that

he made the decision to study art seriously and to devote the majority of his energy to becoming a professional artist.

**Personal Artistic Criteria**

While remaining at ACC for a third and final semester, Robbins began to formulate personal criteria to be used in the evaluation of his artistic work. At this time, he took Art Appreciation with Catherine Brimberry. In this course, she explained that the *content* of a work of art is composed of three elements working together: *subject matter*, plus *form*, plus *context*, equals *content.* This was a dictum that Robbins would utilize over and over again in the evaluation of his own creative achievements.

**First Inspiration**

In addition to making a career choice and developing criteria for artistic evaluation, while at ACC, Robbins was artistically inspired for the first time in his adult life. Much earlier in his childhood, however, he had also met with inspiration. When asked to describe both of these original experiences, he recounted:

> The first painting I made was in 1987, what I mean is the first oil painting on canvas; I had of course painted before using children's tempera paints and coloring in coloring books. Actually, I would have to say that the first time I felt profound inspiration while making art was at the age of three or four years old, coloring in coloring books. I remember a particular image of Porky Pig zooming round a curve in a racecar. I also remember responding to particular colors: maize yellow, brick red, and periwinkle blue. Of course at the time I did not know the names of these colors, but they remained favorites into grade school when I learned to read the label of the crayon.
>
> As a young adult, in '87, I got some paints for Christmas and painted in *plein-air* [outside], a tree stump in my front yard. I built the painting up using thick brushstrokes of grays and browns, and created a dramatic light to dark explosion of strokes behind the tree. It was such an emotional painting - dark, and solid, and heavy. I gave the painting to my stepbrother and it is now lost. I was deeply

inspired by the painting because it captured how I felt emotionally very specifically.

The next painting I did was a self-portrait, which I still have if you want to see it, which is a little warped and dirty, but captured a certain amount of anxiety and emotion of the time. I did both paintings at about the same time. (Journal Entry. March 22, 2001, pp. 30-31) and (Interview. March 31, 2001, Audio Tape #15-A, Log [277])

**Implications of Aesthetic Experience**

Fourteen years later, the artist described the lasting impact of the aesthetic experience associated with the creation of the tree stump painting. Robbins recalled, "The moment was totally silent - it was foggy, and gray, and cool, and moist outside. I connected with a peace and happiness that I had never known. This is probably why I still paint: in search of that peace" (Journal Entry. Oct. 30, 2001, p. 143). As recently as last year, Robbins posited, "This painting was the first time I can remember making a work of art in my early adult life that took me out of reality, or shifted my sense of reality while in the process" (Personal Correspondence. Email, Oct. 19, 2006).

William Wordsworth (as cited in Benke, 1995) elaborated, "To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower, even the loose stones that cover the high-way, I gave a moral life, I saw them feel, or link'd them to some feeling" (p. 37).

Beittel sought to resolve the conflict between "objective" behaviorist and "subjective" existential-experiential ways of knowing and understanding. Beittel (1973) suggested: "the aesthetic experience is a psychic reality foremost … we must contend with the psychic reality of aesthetic experience within the artist's stream of consciousness in the unique expressive situation" (p.14).

**Sensory Phenomena as Motivation**

According to Dixon and Lerner (1992), "an adequate understanding of any phenomenon (biological or philosophical) requires that it be considered in terms of its position in the present situation and its role in a continuous developmental or historical process" (pp. 10 -11). Additionally, Mandelbaum (as cited in Bornstein & Lamb, 1992)

posited: "the concern is not with the nature of the event itself, [but] … with its place in some process of change" (p. 11). Contrary to Mandelbaum, it was precisely the nature of the event, in concert with its attending affect and implications for future action - that was a primary concern of this researcher. Robbins's recollection of creating the tree stump picture could have been relegated to the status of an interesting anecdote - the memory of a pleasant day painting in the front yard of the family home. Instead, it set in motion Robbins's insatiable quest for artistic knowledge and future aesthetic experiences. It spurred him into immediate action; within a year, he began taking art classes at the University of Texas, at Austin (UT). The story of Robbins's creative journey while attending the UT Department of Art is the topic of the following chapter.

## Chapter VII

## Attending the University of Texas, Austin/Department of Art (1988 - 1992): The Emergence of Two Styles

The tension and alternation between realism and abstraction that characterized Robbins's artistic work from 1991 - 2006, began while he attended undergraduate school at the University of Texas at Austin (UT). Robbins entered the UT Art Department as a sophomore in 1988, and graduated in 1992, earning a Bachelor Degree in Fine Arts (BFA).

### Realism

Realism captivated Robbins's attention for his first two years at UT. In recalling his artistic interests at that time, he explained, "I was always mostly interested in representing something from reality - whether it was a perceptual painting - something I had seen - or from my imagination" (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [060]).

### *The Gravity Series* and the "Tree" image

It was during this time that he created a body of work consisting of a series of landscape paintings depicting dramatically colored dawn and dusk scenarios with highly pronounced horizon lines entitled *The Gravity Series* (fig. 7.1, p. 166). *The Gravity Series* served as an abundant resource for Robbins's artistic thinking and a springboard for future imagery. Later, while at UT, he created a provocative abstract painting of a tree growing inside a room entitled *Interior Tree* (fig. 7.2, p. 167). This image had clear ties to *The Gravity Series*. In recalling the evolution of the tree image, Robbins explained:

**Title:** ***The Gravity Series*** **(fig. 7.1)**

**Medium: Oil on Wood**

**Title: *Interior Tree* (fig. 7.2)**

**Medium: Gouache**

> The symbol of the tree came up when I was an undergraduate dealing with landscapes; I was dealing with the horizon line and I thought the horizon was very basic, a very universal experience - and then I thought, what would be the opposite of the horizon line would be the tree, things growing against gravity. The tree was the most simple thing I could find that would counter the horizon line and stand against it.
>
> It [the *Interior Tree* painting] started as just an ink sketch - that first sketch actually became this painting in gouache. The tree captured my imagination and it crept up in other paintings later on … trees mean more to me that I can't describe in words. (Interview. March 24, 2001. Audio Tape #4-A, Log [375])

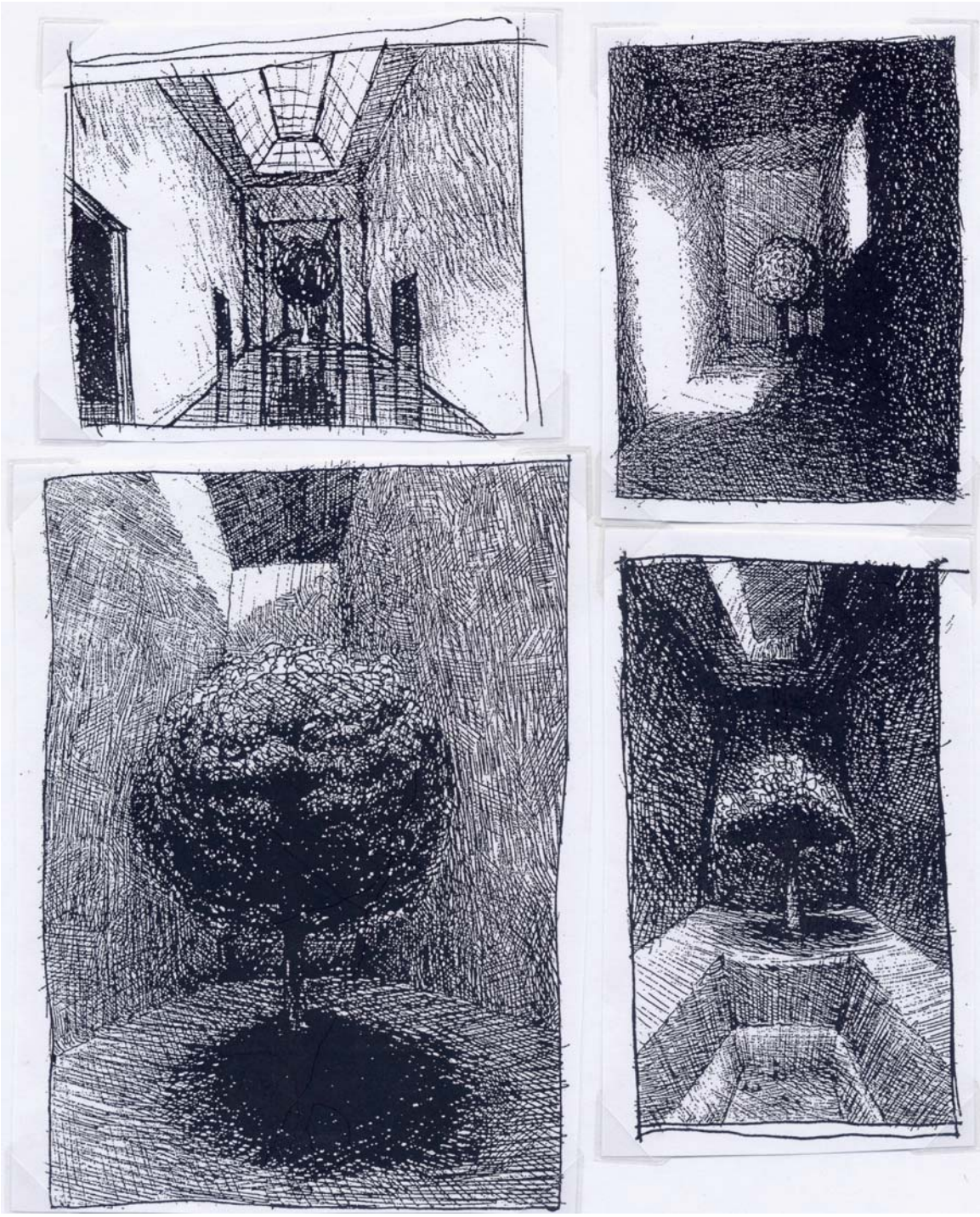
Ten years later, Robbins sketched four trees in ink (fig. 7.3, p. 169). These drawings allowed us to visualize the way he began the *Interior Tree* painting in 1991 (Journal Entry. March 11, 2001, p. 25).

Robert Levers, one of Robbins's art professors at UT, made a comment to him about how artists used discernment in selecting imagery. Robbins remembered: "He [Levers] said to me once, that artists have to find the *nouns* before the *verbs*. The solitary tree might be my noun" (Journal Entry. May 28, 2001, p. 76).

**Combining realism and abstraction**

In addition to the power of the "tree" as a visual image, for Robbins, the painting entitled *Interior Tree* was important for another reason; Robbins felt that in this painting he was successfully able to combine realism with a unique abstract approach that he had developed while in undergraduate school. He named the abstract approach "doodling," because of its spontaneous quality. In 2001, Robbins acknowledged the connection:

> This image has been pleasing for years now. It has never lost its power to intrigue and please me. It suggests a place and a content that is spiritual - It leads the viewer into thinking in spiritual terms, possibly … this feels very "right" - this approach to imagery and process combines doodling and realism very effectively. (Journal Entry. March 11, 2001, p. 23)



**Title: Tree Sketches in Pen and Ink (fig. 7.3)**

**Journal Entry: March 11, 2001**

**Abstraction**

The works of art Robbins completed during his first three years at UT were predominantly done in a realistic style. Prior to his senior year, Robbins stated:

> I didn't really do abstractions on my own; [I] didn't play around with abstraction as a way of painting. The things that were abstract that I had dealt with before, [were] assignments for classes - like 2-D Design Class. We used acrylic paint, to paint compositions - abstractions from found objects. I began my understanding of what abstraction was as early as that. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [050])

**Automatic process "*doodling*"**

During Robbins final year at UT, a radical change took place in his work, first in his approach to drawing, and finally in his painting process as well. In addition to the realistic style that had proven quite fruitful in the past, Robbins began to develop an innovative method that emphasized "doing," rather than "planning," in the process of creating. This approach yielded works of a clearly abstract nature. The personal satisfaction and enthusiasm Robbins experienced while working in this newly discovered manner were captured in this recollection:

> I had this landscape show, but at the same time I was playing around with an automatic process, drawing in a sketchbook … in a cubist sort of way, doodling around, and then kind of shading it in. And, I liked the way that, that felt - I liked the overall pattern of it, the rhythm of it, the feeling of space - this kind of shallow graphic space like the cubists had. I was interested in those things; I thought it looked good and the images were suggestive. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [012])

The automatic drawing process described by Robbins, formed the basis for future artistic endeavors. While attending Richard Jordan's class at UT during the summer of 1991, Robbins began to paint abstractly utilizing the same automatic process employed in his drawings. He referred to the abstractions done at this time as "doodle paintings." As

recently as the fall of 2006, Robbins has continued to use the term "doodles" when referring to works created as a result of utilizing his automatic process.

**Limitations**

A central theme and guiding force in the development of Robbins's early abstract work was the limitations he placed on himself. He explained, "I like the order/unity of limits. They (limitations) take on the role of parents so that I can openly play like a child" (Journal Entry. June 9, 2000, p. 67). When first working abstractly, Robbins recalled: "I limited myself to a certain scale, materials, and process" (Journal Entry. May 1, 2000, p. 41). The use of a limited color palette, and a white background with green or red line-work, was apparent in the first abstract doodle paintings that Robbins completed entitled, *Doodle Abstraction Series #1-A, and #1-B* (figs. 7.4 & 7.5, p. 172).

**Intuition encouraged**

While at UT, Robbins developed the ability to trust in his intuition. He felt that his professors rewarded him when he did not try to execute an idea, or superimpose a concept onto his artwork. Rather, they promoted the philosophy that making art was about discovering through the act of doing. Robbins remembered:

> Bill Lundberg and Regina Vater helped me to understand that my strongest work came from my setting up chance operations and stream of consciousness and responding instead of over-thinking it … it was this trust in process and love of doing that came through in the work. (Journal Entry. Feb. 25, 2003, p. 8)

**Summoning creative courage**

The writer, Anais Nin (as cited in Wallace & Gruber, 1989), once said, "The core of creation is to summon an image and the power to work with the image" (p. 217). By the time Robbins became a senior, he was confident that he had developed an instinct for relying on action and doing, as opposed to contemplation and pre-planning. He pondered: "I think that's ultimately the real value in what I learned at UT - was to trust myself in the act of doing - that I would discover something of value in the work" (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [097]). The professors at UT

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #1-A* (fig. 7.4)**

**Medium: Oil on Canvas (1991)**

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #1-B* (fig. 7.5)**

**Medium: Oil on Canvas (1991)**

encouraged Robbins to make art using his own natural inclinations, without censoring his work - thus allowing the viewer to interpret his images in their own way. John-Steiner (as cited in Wallace and Gruber, 1989) posited: "The images in Nin's novels were neither fleeting sensations nor photographic glimpses. She strove to capture the symbolic aspects of reality and consequently often left interpretation to the reader" (p. 217).

**Artistic Dilemmas**

In 1992, Robbins completed the requirements for a Bachelor of Fine Arts from UT, Austin. Unbeknownst to him, soon afterwards, his creative life would undergo a radical transformation. Dramatic events impacting his artistic direction quickly began to unfold. The opportunity for continuous artistic productivity that had been afforded to Robbins during his undergraduate tenure ceased abruptly. The protective wave of creative security provided by the academic environment of the university passed over him, leaving in its wake, paralyzing financial uncertainty, coupled with a jarring disruption in Robbins's creative continuity. Replacements for enthusiastic support, on-going encouragement, and a sense of artistic well-being, offered by the academic environment, were not to be found in society as a whole. The artist's response to these dilemmas follows.

## Chapter VIII

## The Interim (1992 - 1995): A Collision Course

During the interim between Robbins's graduation from the University of Texas, Austin, (UT) in 1992, and his admission to the graduate program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in 1995, Robbins found himself faced with a variety of difficult challenges. After leaving UT, a three-year collision course was set in motion between Robbins's artistic work and his work ethic. Years of hard work, and diligent attention to his education had come to an end. He was no longer an art student; suddenly, he was now a professional artist. He did not know exactly how, but he felt sure that at some point soon, all he had learned during his time at the university would come together in an art career. Everything would quickly gel, and he would find an art gallery to represent him, either here in Texas, or in New York, Los Angeles, or some other major art center. He would create paintings, earn money from their sales, and that would be his life.

### House painting

At first, Robbins worked for his father's contracting company painting houses for a living. He felt a strong sense of financial obligation to take on this job in order to support himself while establishing his career as an artist. In his spare time, he also began to create landscape paintings. One of the primary reasons he chose to paint landscapes was because he believed they would sell better than his abstract pieces. In the landscape paintings, he recognized the potential to free himself from his unhappy life as a house painter, thus allowing him to move toward his goal of becoming a full-time artist.

**Landscape painting**

Lack of style and continuity characterized Robbins's landscape paintings done at this time, he recalled:

> I didn't really have a style yet - I was still trying to figure that out - so I'd have one landscape that was done purely from perception which would look rather realistic, and then I'd have another one that was done from imagination that would look rather abstract (*Burning Building*, fig. 8.1, p. 176), and I'd have another one that was done from imagination that would look surrealist, like a Magritte (*Boat Tree*, fig. 8.2, p. 177), and so I really wasn't consistent - I wasn't really ready for showing - I don't think - I wasn't really selling - I think I sold one painting for $300.00. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [291])

**Rejects House Painting**

The stress and accompanying exhaustion of painting houses for 40 hours a week, while trying to remain creative on his days off, finally became overwhelming. By the summer of 1994, the frustration level had become intolerable. Robbins took action that enabled him to carve a space for his artistic work; he recounted, with vivid clarity, the moment he confronted his disdain for house painting and his artistic courage surfaced. He explained:

> It's very difficult, I didn't like it at all, I realized one day, after house painting for the entire morning. I was sitting in my car eating my sandwich for lunch, and I was listening to an AM channel on my radio and there was a gospel preacher in Chicago, of all places, was talking about, how, if you really trust that you are where God wants you to be, you will be happy - and I remember, the light turned on in my head, and I thought, I am miserable painting these houses - I am going to be brave, and I am going to try to strike out and make a change. I had saved up a little money and I thought, I'm gonna live off my savings for a few months and just paint and produce paintings that would hopefully sell. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [328])

**Title:** ***The Burning Building*** **(fig. 8.1)**

**(1994)**

**Title: *Boat Tree* (8.2)**

**Medium: Oil on Wood (1994)**

His rejection of house painting was the first step toward the creation of a series of paintings that would form the basis for the portfolio that would eventually gain his admission to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC).

**Shift from landscapes to doodles**

Robbins quit his job as a house painter in 1994. For the first month, he painted landscapes that were exhibited for sale in a local art gallery in Austin. Nevertheless, he quickly became disheartened with the low number of sales. At that point, with very little savings remaining before he would be forced to start painting houses again, he made the decision to radically change the approach he was taking in his artistic work. He recalled:

> I thought to myself, if I've only got another month, I am going to enjoy this next month. I'm just going to simply paint for my own process - for my own enjoyment of painting. I'm not going to produce a product. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006, Tape 23-A, Log [348])

In a radical departure, Robbins redirected his artistic energy. He made the decision to abandon the landscape paintings he was making at the time, and to return to the automatic, doodle painting process that had served him well during his final year at UT in 1991. This startling shift in focus resulted in a powerful surge of creative energy. Within a four-week period, he had produced 16 paintings (*Doodle Abstraction Series #2-A and #2-B,* fig. 8.3 & 8.4, p. 179), and an entire series of drawings. He recollected:

> When I finally cracked under the strain of trying so hard and failing over and over again, art just came flooding in without my having to do anything special … the paintings took shape in front of me as if someone else was making them - it was an extremely productive month. (Journal Entry. July 31, 2006, p. 116)

**Narrowing Artistic Parameters**

The actual process of making this series of doodle paintings was spontaneous and unencumbered by conscious manipulation, however, before beginning, Robbins made several conscious decisions that promoted freedom in his work. Like he had done before while attending art classes at UT, he laid out some specific physical boundaries for his materials. This prevented him from becoming frustrated by constantly being distracted

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #2-A* (fig. 8.3)**

**Medium: Acrylic on Board (1994)**

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #2-B* (fig. 8.4)**

**Medium: Acrylic on Board (1994)**

with conscious artistic decisions - such as - having to select which brush or color to use, or considering how long he would need to wait between applying layers of paint.

For this series, Robbins chose a single small brush, two or three colors, and he switched from slow-drying oil paint, to fast-drying acrylic paint. The small brush size placed restrictions on the type and speed of his brushwork, thereby impacting the types of images that were possible. Mainly, Robbins was able to make small gestures with his hand, rather than broad, sweeping movements that would require the use of his entire arm and body.

The limited color scheme freed him to spend more time developing his imagery, and less on considering the variations of hues within the paintings. Robbins recalled: "… the process is free and open and the forms find their own boundaries, each brush-load like an individual person with the color chosen and the gesture made by my wrist and fingers limited to its own nature" (Journal Entry. November 15, 2001, p. 52).

The fast-drying quality of acrylic paint decreased the extended waiting time required for the paint to dry between applications. Robbins explained, "… the acrylic paint dries fast, you can just keep going … I can layer the colors more quickly than I did in Jordan's class at UT where I worked in oil" (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-A, Log [348]).

The narrowing of Robbins's artistic parameters contributed to the overall unity and harmony characteristic of each painting found within this series. Robbins offered a detailed description:

> I decided to simplify the process to mixing a color with a single brush and depositing the paint on the surface in a variety of ways centered on the gestures of the fingers and wrist. This repetitive activity resonated with my mind and body throughout the day, and by the evening I was washed with the aesthetic feeling or experience. It was wonderful, and the artwork was beautiful as well. (Journal Entry. October 30, 2001, p. 146)

**Similarities and Differences (1991 and 1994)**

The doodle paintings created in 1994 (fig. 8.3 & 8.4, p. 179), exhibited characteristics not previously found in Robbins's work, nevertheless, specific aspects of the process and image development were tethered to the original doodle series created while he attended UT in 1991 (fig. 7.4 & 7.5, p. 172). The series of doodle paintings completed in 1991 and 1994, respectively, were similar in a variety of ways. In both series, the artist utilized large canvases, a single, small brush - to the exclusion of all others, a limited number of colors, and amorphous shapes tightly filling the picture plane, more so, in the center and less dense toward the outer edges.

The two series differed in several notable ways. Even though both series contained numerous unrecognizable abstract shapes and forms, the 1994 series also possessed some identifiable, toy-like characters, and fanciful images, i.e. birdlike forms, and human eyeballs. Additionally, the paintings done in 1994 also contained "illusionistic" windows. An illusionistic window was a clearly delineated realistic area in the midst of all the abstract forms that appeared to pierce through the picture plane, created depth, and revealed the hint of another hidden dimension underneath the canvas. It usually contained a realistic element such as a stand of trees, or a person, suggested a distant reality, or an alternate world that lay just below the surface of the painting.

**Positive Outcomes**

The 1994 doodle series very quickly generated three positive outcomes for Robbins. First, in 1995, he was asked to have an exhibition of paintings from this series in a prominent Ft. Worth art gallery, the Forest Park Art Space. Second, while on exhibit in Ft. Worth, the paintings were critically reviewed in the Texas based *Journal of Contemporary Art*. And finally, this series of paintings formed the heart of the portfolio that Robbins submitted to various graduate school programs in 1994 and 1995. Following interviews at Yale, and the Rhode Island School of Design, Robbins was accepted into the Master of Fine Arts Program offered by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Ultimately, his experiences at the SAIC would nourish his burgeoning interest in painting, and set him on the path toward a career as a college art

instructor.  The details of Robbins's artistic development while attending graduate school at the SAIC arte the subject of the following chapter.

## Chapter IX

## Chicago (1995-1998): The Struggle Begins

Robbins lived in Chicago for three years. During the first two years (1995 - 1997), he was enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts program of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Upon graduation, he taught art classes at a community college for one year before returning to Austin in 1998. Artistically, educationally, and personally, this was a time of extremes; stunning accomplishments were countered by devastating reversals.

### The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and the "Monster Roster"

Robbins's work was well received by the graduate faculty of the (SAIC), who offered encouragement for his automatic doodle painting process. Renowned abstract artist and art professor, Ray Yoshida staunchly supported Robbins's admission to SAIC. Yoshida was a member of the "Monster Roster," a group of Chicago artists famous for their advocacy of the "unconscious" as an abundantly rich source of artistic imagery (Robbins. Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-B, Log [025]). Yoshida enthusiastically promoted Robbins's automatic doodle painting process, and his entry into the graduate program. Robbins remembered, "Ray Yoshida wanted me as a student because of my interview and my slide presentation" (Journal Entry. April 25, 2000, p. 36).

Other faculty members of the SAIC offered additional enthusiasm for Robbins's doodle work, encouraging him to stay in contact with his intuition by avoiding contrivances and over-thinking his work. Robbins recalled:

> A teacher of mine in grad school, Dan Gustin, said that my work was too clever, that I should dumb down my hands like Morandi … When I think of Morandi and

> Cezanne, I do not think they had tricks up their sleeves. Also Giacommetti, they were all artists with a deep sincerity and they did what they did, and nature, or God, seemed to have a finger in the occurrences of their practices. (Journal Entry. March 15, 2000, p. 8)

Likewise, additional SAIC faculty members promoted Robbins's intuitiveness. He recalled, "If I don't allow a certain amount of my decisions about form and image to come out of my intuition then I miss out on what Ted Halkin said was my strongest trait" (Journal Entry. May 1, 2000, p. 41).

**Abstraction and Realism (from shapes and forms to signs and symbols)**

While in graduate school, Robbins pursued his interests in both abstract and realistic approaches to painting. Reflecting on the ideas that formed the basis of each approach, he wrote:

> When I think back to my grad school days, I remember that I was investigating a relationship between external and internal reality. I think the philosophical arguments about reality interested me so much because they are what is at the core of my entire body of works, both "doodle" and "realist" together. The doodle works investigated the point, or grey area, where shapes, or forms, become identified as sign or symbol. The realism (as an interest) has been because I can feel my own consciousness actively creating signs and symbols from memory based on the stimulation of sensory experience. (Journal Entry. November 24, 2002, p. 56)

**Freedom Demolished**

When Robbins arrived in Chicago, he resumed working in the automatic abstract style that had been so pleasing to him less than a year earlier. Robbins felt that these paintings were created with a sense of freedom and spontaneity. However, John Rozelle, one of his professors, had a different opinion; Rozelle believed that the doodle paintings looked controlled and consciously planned out. Robbins recollected:

> John had made me aware that I was in control of what it was I was doing as I doodled. He did not see that it was something intuitive. Without the belief that I

> was inspired, it just went away from me … I somehow became less trusting and playful … it took my swing. John did not mean to throw me for such a loop I don't think. (Personal Correspondence. November 6, 2006)

Robbins's long held conviction that his doodle paintings were done with an open and unencumbered mindset quickly began to unravel. Robbins reflected: "Right away in grad school I had my belief that the doodles functioned for freedom demolished" (Journal Entry, October 30, 2002, p. 35).

**Resurgence of Realism (Five Factors)**

At the same time Robbins was having doubts about his doodle painting process, his interest in realism began to resurface. Five factors contributed to its resurgence. First, the Museum of the Art Institute of Chicago possessed an extensive collection of realist and impressionist paintings. Robbins spent countless hours viewing masterpieces by Ce'zanne, Degas, Monet, Seurat, and Turner, among others. This continuous exposure contributed immensely to his curiosity about, and interest in, realism.

Second, Robbins came in contact with professors at SAIC who were teaching realist/perceptual painting techniques. Through his study with realist/perceptual painters such as Suzannah Coffey and others, he was able to broaden his technical skills in that genre. This was very different from his experiences in undergraduate school; at UT, Robbins's teachers were neither interested in painting realistically themselves, nor in teaching realistic techniques to their students.

Third, Robbins viewed realism as a refuge, both artistically, and personally. Working in a realistic manner offered a sense of protection, orderly structure, and a quiet respite from the turmoil he was encountering in his new marriage. Robbins recalled: "I withdrew into realism as a grad student: my "withdrawal" (into realism) was due to my relationship with Fran becoming rocky and the security that realism presented" (Journal Entry. January 12, 2002, p. 6). Looking back, he added: " Now I realize that my attitude in school was conditioned by my bad marriage and the guilt and pain I still feel continues to make it difficult for me to relax and paint out of play" (Journal Entry. September 30, 2002, p. 22).

Fourth, Robbins felt that expertise in realistic painting techniques would be beneficial to him as an art instructor. He began teaching while at the SAIC and continued to teach following his graduation. He stated: "I remember thinking that my interests in realism would be good for my teaching career because it would show possible employers that I have the skills to teach fundamentals" (Journal Entry. April 27, 2000, p. 39).

Fifth, Robbins possessed an ongoing love of realism that had been with him since he created his first oil painting of the tree stump in his parents' front yard some eight years earlier. He continued to find the physical world a fascinating source of realistic subject matter.

Robbins was moved by an image that he saw of himself reflected in a window of his graduate art studio. He remembered:

> The painting entitled, *Night Studio* (fig. 9.1, p. 187) was done from life. It was a view out of the window of my studio at night. I was interested in trying to capture the reflections in the window at the same time as the view outside, and in curving perspective. The fisheye lens, or television screen look is due to the expanded perspectival view. (Personal Correspondence. November 8, 2006)

**Combining Realism and Abstraction**

In addition to creating realistic paintings, Robbins attempted to combine realism and abstraction into one painting process. These two diametrically opposed methods of working would resist Robbins's best efforts at reconciliation. He noted: "When thinking back to the process I went through in grad school, I see a struggle to blend my interests in realism with doodling. I struggled with it from the beginning of my studies to the very end" (Journal Entry. September 30, 2002, p. 21).

**Comparing Doodle Painting Series - Narrative Added**

The earlier doodle paintings done in 1991 and 1994 utilized an automatic process in which Robbins made no conscious effort to incorporate any realistic elements. Colors, shapes, and forms were not intentionally referential in those works. However, in 1996, he sought to create a narrative by purposefully planting recognizable images within a sea of abstract forms. Robbins explained:

**Title:** ***Night Studio*** **(fig. 9.1)**

**Medium: Oil on Wood (1996)**

> I started to deal more in my second year of grad school with imagery in the doodle paintings … if the viewers looked at a painting and just saw a lot of grunts and groans in terms of images - they might not see them as images at all - but if you put one image in there that was descriptive enough that they would see it as an image then they would start to see these other suggested images - that would trigger a response to the rest of the abstraction - it would start to create a narrative. Interview. September 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-B, Log [235])

The narrative became the missing link between realism and abstraction. Both realism and abstraction could be connected, even though they dealt with perception in different ways (*Doodle Abstraction Series #3-A, and #3-B*, fig. 9.2 & 9.3, p. 189). Robbins clarified:

> So, rather than a perceptual painting just being an object that represents what you see - a realistic painting could include this suggested narrative [within an abstract painting] that a person brings to form … most viewers would begin to see the images as symbols from their own stock - from their own memories. (Interview. September 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-B, Log [252])

**Loss of the Doodle Paintings**

Problems soon arose in the doodle work that had never been there before. Now, the introduction of descriptive images controlled the viewer's interpretation of the work. The tendency for the narrative to degenerate into a "Where's Waldo?" scenario was very real and troubling for Robbins. He reflected:

> In the end what I wound up learning was that, in a large part what gave the doodle paintings [done in 1991 and 1994] their power or their effectiveness was the fact that people perceived them based on what their own particular set of memories or experiences were - that the paintings were more open for the viewer to interpret them in their own way - that there were these suggested images. (Interview. September 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-B, Log [210])
>
> Robbins went on, he explained:

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #3-A* (fig. 9.2)**

**Medium: Oil on Canvas (1997)**

**Title: *Doodle Abstraction Series #3-B* (fig. 9.3)**

**Medium: Oil on Canvas (1997)**

> I think by the time I had gotten to the end of my grad study, I had lost the doodle paintings, … lost them to this concept of trying to incorporate perceptual painting with this doodling. (Interview. Sept. 27, 2006. Audio Tape # 23-B, Log [560])

**Alternating - doodle process to realism and back again**

During Robbins's tenure at SAIC, his artistic momentum gradually shifted toward realism, and away from the doodle works that had originally secured his position in the graduate program. His professors at SAIC enthusiastically supported his doodle painting process; therefore he felt an obligation to try to continue working abstractly even after his interest had moved in the direction of realism. Robbins reflected: "All of my teachers at the Art Institute supported my natural tendencies as an artist and now looking back seemed accepting but a little sorrowful over my changing from the doodle works to the realism" (Journal Entry. April, 25, 2000, p. 36).

By the time Robbins reached the end of his graduate studies he was experiencing a great deal of conflict as to the direction his work should take, nevertheless, he produced two quite satisfying doodle paintings at this time. He reflected on how he felt, "I realize looking at my last paintings in grad school, the ones that hung in the thesis show, (*Doodle Abstraction Series #3-A, and #3-B,* fig. 9.2 & 9.3, p. 189) that in school, I went through a convoluted process of trying many different things and then at the end when the show was approaching I put it all together in these beauties" (Journal Entry. December 23, 2000, p. 146).

**Three Realistic Methods of Painting and Pattern of Alternation**

While in graduate school, Robbins developed three methods of painting realistically. First, he worked from life utilizing direct sensory experience. Second, he used photographs as visual memory prompts; he recalled: "When I was in Chicago and working on the realist paintings, I was after an honesty that I thought was revealed by the snapshot" (Journal Entry. December 15, 2000, p. 120). Third, he began incorporating the concept of curved perspective into an otherwise realistic setting. Each of these approaches, accompanied by his pattern of alternating between the two approaches of

realism and the automatic doodle painting process, were continued in the work done following Robbins's graduation from the SAIC.

## Chapter X

### Academia and Art Making: The Struggle Continues, (1998-2002)

In 1997, Noel Robbins graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), earning a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in painting and drawing. He was not content living in Chicago, and even though he had secured several teaching positions at various colleges in the Chicago area, he remained there for only one year following graduation. Additionally, despite valiant efforts at reconciliation, Robbins and his wife separated in 1998, at which time he returned to Austin alone.

**Looming Violence and "Street Smarts"**

The following passage vividly revealed the level of discontentment Robbins was experiencing, he explained:

> I liked it [Chicago] for some reasons, but for the most part, I did not like it [emphasis his]. It was so stressful - so fast-paced - there's always this looming violence. It was just too big - a monster of a city. I really appreciated the museums, but it wasn't enough to keep me there. The winters were so cold, and long … so much really hard work just to live there - very stressful to constantly be watching over your shoulder to make sure you're not running into any trouble. You always had to have your "street smarts" - always aware of everybody around you - aware of your space. The whole thing felt like it was always pressing in on me. I really wanted to leave the city. (Interview. September 27, 2006. Audio Tape #23-B, Log [365])

**Academia**

After returning to Austin in 1998, Robbins's life and artistic process came under the influence of two areas of academia - teaching and research participation. First,

Robbins dramatically increased his teaching responsibilities, and devoted a considerable amount of time to learning how to teach art. He began teaching art classes at Austin Community College (ACC) in the fall of 1998. During the spring of 1999, he taught and developed new course offerings at the School of the Austin Museum of Art at Laguna Gloria. Also, in 2000, Robbins began teaching students independently in his own studio.

**Initial Encounter**

I met Noel Robbins shortly after he returned to Austin; we were both teaching design and drawing classes at ACC in the fall of 1999. The first time I encountered his artwork was the day he presented his slides at a meeting of the Student Art Association that same year. My imagination was captivated by the expansive variation of styles and imagery present in his body of work. Robbins became a participant in this research study in 1999.

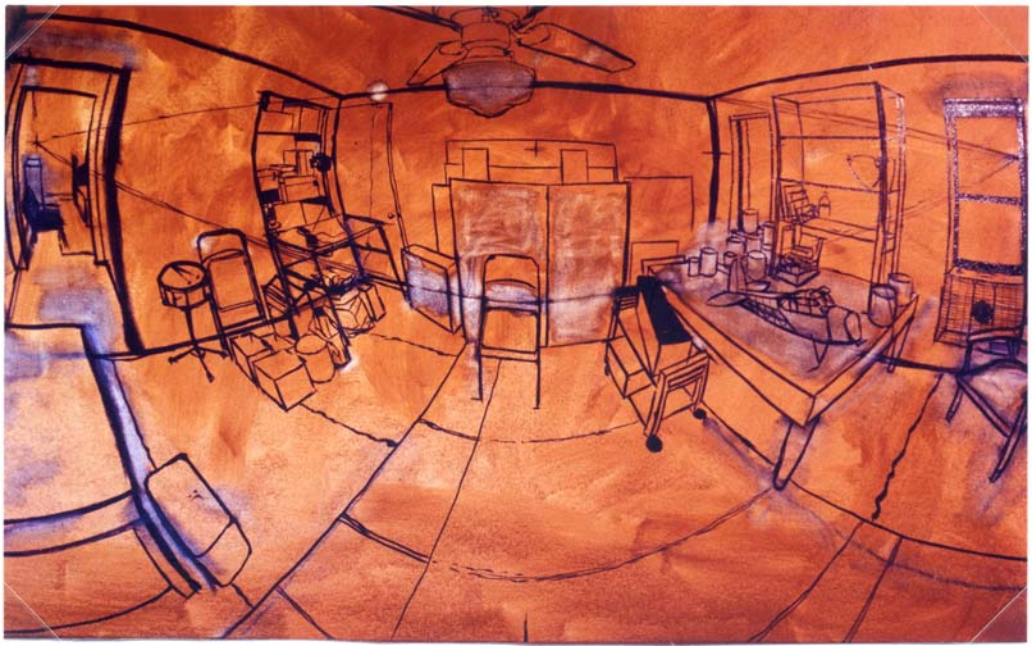
**Robbins's Journal**

Robbins faithfully kept a personal journal that documented his artistic life beginning in March of 2000, and continuing through August of 2006. In the first entry he noted:

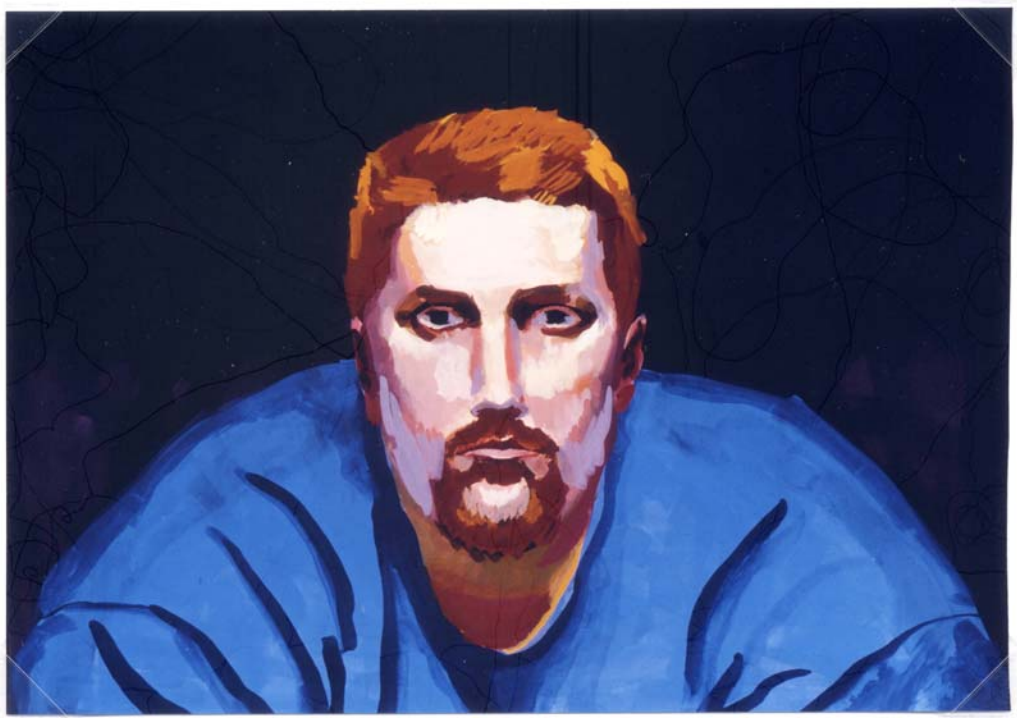
> I am writing this journal to record my thoughts and feelings specifically related to the paintings and drawings created during Brucie Bowman's study of my creative process. There are three major paintings I will be working on: 1) I will call the "studio painting" (fig. 10.1, p. 194), 2) "self-portrait" (fig. 10.2, p. 194), 3) "backyard" (fig. 10.3, p. 195). The backyard painting requires an easel (fig. 10.4, p. 195) that I built for large-scale paintings to be done away from the studio. This easel is built of 2 x 4s and sawhorse joints. (Journal Entry. March 14, 2000, p.1)

**Robbins's Creative Cycle Resumes**

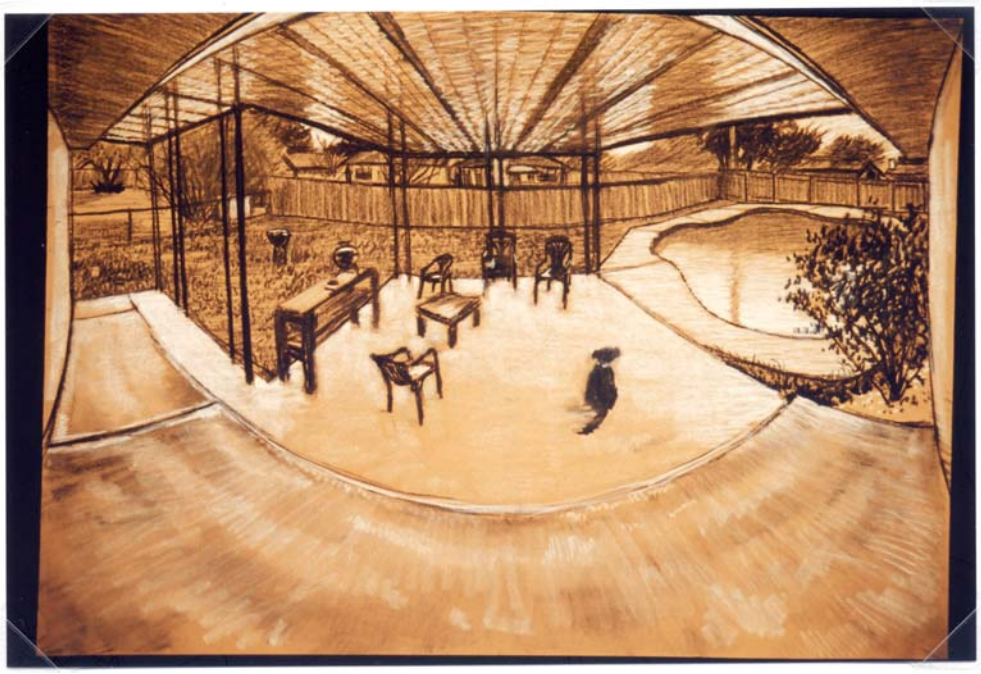
Beginning in graduate school, the styles of realism and abstraction relentlessly vied for his attention. Interested in both, he continuously alternated from one to the other. Soon after returning to Austin, Robbins began to make art, and once more, his creative process came under the domination of those same opposing forces.



**Title:** ***Studio Painting #2 (Curved Perspective)*** **(fig. 10.1)**



**Title:** ***Self-Portrait*** **(fig. 10.2)**



**Title: *Kathy's Backyard* (fig. 10.3)**

**Photograph: Artist's Easel (fig. 10.4)**

**Sacred Places**

In 1999, Robbins's work began to focus on specific places that were particularly meaningful to him. Some were interior spaces such as those found in *Studio Painting #2 [curved perspective]* (fig. 10.1, p. 194); others were exterior spaces (*Private Yard*, fig. 10.5 & 10.6, p. 197). Robbins reflected, "I'm getting interested in doing this painting of the backyard (*Kathy's Backyard*, fig. 10.3, p. 195), because it's not just the studio that's sacred, it's everyplace is sacred" (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [360]).

**One Place - Two Paintings - Two Styles**

Robbins completed two paintings of his studio done in different styles between 1999 and 2000. This is the first time that he had worked realistically and abstractly from the same subject matter. These paintings provided a unique opportunity for comparisons. Stylistically, these works ranged from the perceptually realistic piece entitled, *Studio Painting #1 [realism]* (fig. 10.7 & 10.8, p. 198), to the semi-abstract version of the same space entitled, *Studio Painting #2 [curved perspective]* (fig.# 10.9, p. 198). Additional areas of comparison included: space, color, and perception.

**The Studio Painting Destroyed**

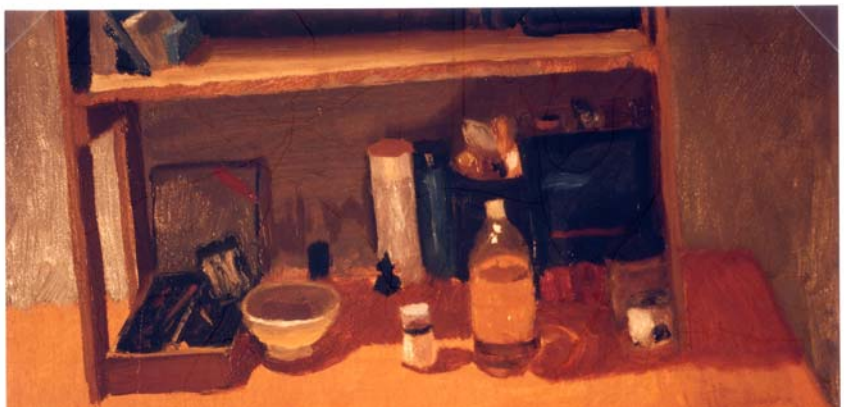
Robbins's first attempt at painting his studio failed. While in the very early stages, he made an abrupt decision to cover up his work and switch over to making a doodle painting. This radical change in direction was recorded on tape (Videotape #1-A, 1999). A sample analysis sheet is located on p. 199, fig. 10.10. Robbins described the moment his artistic focus shifted. He recalled:

> When I first wanted to do the studio was over a year ago, and on that videotape, the [doodle] painting originally was the studio … it switched over right there. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [268]
>
> I switched modes of operation and out of doubt and fear returned to the doodle process. (Journal Entry. March 14, 2000, p. 2)

**Title:** ***Private Yard (Detail)*** **(fig. 10.5)**

**Title:** ***Private Yard*** **(fig. 10.6)**

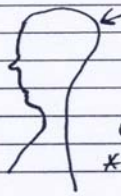
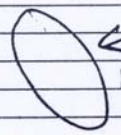
**Title: *Studio Painting #1 (realism)* (fig. 10.7, top) Detail (fig. 10.8, below)**



**Title: *Studio Painting #2 (Curved Perspective)* (fig. 10.9)**

**RUBRIC - VIDEO TAPE DATA ANALYSIS SHEET**
**Rubric designed by: Brucie Garrett Bowman**

Artist: Noel Robbins Researcher: B.G. Bowman
Video taping date/location: Fall 1999 artist's studio Session# 1-3
Transcription date/location: Spring 2000 - 9006 Quail Ck. Dr., Austin, TX
Analysis date/location: Spring 2000, 2003, 2006 - 9006 Quail Ck. Dr. Austin, TX
Video Tape # 1 Format VHS Title of Artwork: "Doodle Painting" - Series #4

| Researcher Analysis | Facture | Artist/Environment |
|---|---|---|
| *Shifts Focus<br>rapid change in direction<br>starts to cover up realistic ptg. quickly<br>covers everything except BOTTLES to left<br>* approach shifts to drawing images out of head - not looking at Room anymore -<br>switches brushes several times - differs from "one brush" approach used in 1994 series | Begins work on "realistic" Studio ptg.<br>burnt sienna outline<br>adds objects to table (b+w)<br>begin putting gray + black patches (opaque) over original ptg. -<br>rubs gray paint over original Studio ptg. - shakes bottle of paint medium | Session (1)<br>camera ≤ front/left<br>jazzy music<br>green checked shirt<br>scratches head<br>standing<br>looks at objects in room to left<br>left hand in pocket<br>looks into camera to left of ptg. |
| | * covers entire canvas w/yellow "ground" uses Naples yellow over Cad. yellow -<br>retains small group of bottles to left | Session (2)<br>camera shuts off - starts again - another day - different clothes<br>white shirt/jeans<br>* moves slowly rt. begins rubbing out Studio ptg. |
| continues to draw in all SECTORS<br>adds opaque areas - does not create fig./ground relationship objects exist in their own unique space not relating directly to each other | * large organic shape to right - head at bottom<br>  <br>← 1st time adds white solid areas to profile fig.<br>* cartoon dog<br>  <br>← * gray greenish balloon shape to rt.<br>* adds head w/bump | session (3)<br>* music<br>* Black shorts white shirt<br>* left hand in pocket<br>* takes ptg. off wall leans ptg. up against wall then returns to wall hanging position<br>* (Cathy enters Room) sister |

**Video Tape Data Analysis Sheet (fig. 10.10)**

**Affect Skewed**

At the time of this shift various factors affected his motivation; internal conflict, inadequate emotional response, and the overall fragile nature of his approach, were apparent in the following commentary. Robbins explained:

> Sometimes you cannot feel it even when you try - I tried to feel the studio painting. Insecurities are a part of the process, a lot of changes, decisions, and indecisions. I had this initial attraction to want to paint that studio table (fig. 10.8, p. 198) - but there was something about it that wasn't quite right at the time. I didn't feel good about it. I was flagging around trying to discover something about what direction to go in. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-B, Log [170])

***Studio Painting #1 (realism)* (fig. 10.7 & 10.8, p. 196)**

Later in 1999-2000, Robbins was able to successfully transfer his initial interests in space, color, and perception, into the work entitled, *Studio Painting #1 [realism]* (fig. 10.7 & 10.8, p. 198).

**Space**

> After completing the realistic studio painting, Robbins reflected on his interests: At that time, what I was really being inspired by was the idea of space. How can I depict space in this direct sort of way? How do I put one color next to another so that they function as objects in space? I kind of boiled it down to the color of light and shadow - so it's not necessarily like a solved problem for me now. I mean because it's still very living, and it's also the reason I have to do it from life as opposed to photographs. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [285])

**Color**

Robbins's perception of the colors of the objects in his studio, rather than their actual colors, influenced his artistic decisions. He offered a description:

> The box on the left-hand side that's underneath the blue canister where the brushes are (fig. 10.7, p. 198) - that facing side is painted kind of a gold color.

That's a blue box - but because of the light reflecting back into it from the table it actually has that color. That's a real perceptual thing that I found. I saw it so I put it in there. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [312])

**Perception**

Reality and painting one's perceptions of reality differed substantially. Robbins recalled:

> Whenever I am painting the physical world, I am really painting the experience I'm having of it - as opposed to some sort of an agreed upon image. It is not so much a finished product, as much as it is about grappling with reality - grappling with this experience of the present moment - it's complex. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [345]

***Studio Painting #2 (curved perspective)* (fig. 10.9, p. 198)**

Robbins created a second painting of his studio in which he utilized the concept of *curved perspective*. He sought to compress a large section of three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional canvas. Robbins explained:

> If you were to try to represent more than let's say, 180 degrees of space, then you absolutely have to curve it (the perspective lines) on the flat surface. That's what this curving is about, is capturing more space, but also giving a feeling, I think, connecting myself with the work - connecting the viewer with an intimate experience. It's a phenomenological experience. (Interview. February 25, 2000. Audio Tape #1-A, Log [365])

**Revisiting and Re-evaluating: painting or picture?**

When Robbins began this second studio painting, his creative momentum was high, but it was not enough to fuel the work to its completion. He remembered:

> You know the painting I had of the studio when I lived with my sister? (fig. 10.9, p. 198). It was unfinished, but people liked it unfinished. Everybody who ever saw that liked that painting and reacted to it. And I always thought, well it's unfinished. And what I've realized very recently is that it's the same way that I would respond to someone like Moses Soyer. The texture - it's as much about the

> facture of the painting as it is about the image - it's a painting and it's a picture - it's both. That's what gives it its tension and its energy, and what makes it exciting. (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [108])

**Videotape Analysis Summary - *Studio Painting #2 (curved perspective)* (fig. 10.9, p. 198)**

Analysis of *Studio Painting #2 (curved perspective)* revealed a two-part process at work, including, curved perspective and perception. First, Robbins began the painting with the idea, or concept of using curving perspective as a lens through which he would view his studio. This allowed him to bring a much larger section of the studio into the picture plane than would have been possible through the use of standard one or two-point perspective.

Second, Robbins allowed his perceptual observations and responses to play an equally important role in the development of the painting. Robbins studied the room intensely, selecting and rejecting objects for inclusion based on his personal subjectivity. Then, the selected elements were filtered through the concept of curved perspective and added to the imagery on the canvas.

Close examination of the videotape revealed that both concept and perception were working together simultaneously. This process continued until the original problem of visually compressing space had been solved, and his responses had reached their saturation point.

In addition to his studio, Robbins made drawings and paintings of other places using the concept of curved perspective. He combined curved perspective, with a self-portrait in both the drawing and the painting entitled, *Self-Portrait [Bath]* (fig. 10.11 & 10.12, p. 203).

**"The Room Jumped to Life" - An Emotional Shift**

In April of 2000, Robbins redirected his creative energy. He turned his attention away from realism and curved perspective, and began to focus on a new series of doodle paintings. The sudden shift from realism to abstraction was accompanied by a powerful emotional component. Robbins explained:

**Title:** ***Self-Portrait (Bath)*** **[Drawing] (fig. 10.11, left) [Painting] (fig. 10.12, right)**

> Last night I went into the studio and looked at the studio painting with the curved perspective, and I felt that it was somehow holding me down … I am displeased and bored with my realist work. I took the realist paintings down and put up all the doodle works I could find and immediately the room jumped to life. My reaction to these intuitive works was so strong that I stayed up until 5:00 this morning writing a new class for Laguna Gloria called: *Process and Play: Making Joyful Art.* (Journal Entry. April 25, 2000, p. 33-34)

**Re-learning Old Lessons - Self-Analysis**

Robbins felt that the realistic paintings, and those utilizing the concept of curved perspective emphasized the art product rather than the artistic process. This was not acceptable to his artistic sensibilities. He longed to return to the free, spontaneous, and playful process that had proved successful when he painted the second series of abstract doodle paintings in 1994 (fig. 8.3 & 8.4, p. 179).

When Robbins began working realistically in Chicago, he saw it as a way to learn how to teach art fundamentals and painting techniques to his students. Now he had become disillusioned with the preplanning and conceptualizing that controlled his realistic process. Robbins did not view his realistic work as being his ultimate visual statement. He wrote:

> I remember thinking that my interests in realism would be good for my teaching career. Now that I have gone down that road for the past 4-5 years, I see the lack of fruits from my labor. It seems like a very big lesson to relearn, that the best artwork I am capable of comes from a process of complete freedom and play, no scheming. (Journal Entry. April 27, 2000, p. 38-39)

Nevertheless, since his return to Austin, earlier attempts at creating an abstract doodle painting had not been successful. Robbins explained:

> The key here is play. I have to learn how to let myself play again. This is why the large doodle painting at the beginning of the time-lapse tape from last year did not work, I was not openly playing; I was instead trying to make a work of art. (Journal Entry. April 25, 2000, p. 35)

**"Finding Something Surprising"**

In May of 2000, Robbins created a new series of doodle paintings in gouache (opaque watercolor) entitled, *Doodle Abstraction Series #4-A,B, and C* (fig. 10.13 & 10.14, p. 206, & fig. 10.15, p. 207). These paintings were accepted for publication in the prestigious art magazine, *New American Paintings.* As he had done in the 1994, *Doodle Abstraction Series #2* (fig. 8.3 & 8.4, p. 179), Robbins once again placed limitations on both his materials and techniques in an effort to free his mind to respond directly to what was happening in the painting. He recalled:

> I bought four nice, rough "Arches" watercolor sheets today so that tonight I could work on the doodle works. I began coating the sheets with specific colors … mellow color combinations, fat slow moving line, searching line - I want to find something surprising when I work (on these paintings), so I limit my materials and processes with the idea that repetitive actions and forms will reveal things in their subtle differences. (Journal Entry. May 31, 2000, p. 61-65)

While working on the fourth doodle series (fig. 10.13, 10.14, & 10.15, p. 206 & 207), his joy of working intuitively was rekindled. He wrote: "Tonight I worked tirelessly on my art … I haven't enjoyed this kind of freedom and looseness since before graduate school. My first priority right now is to respond without thinking" (Journal Entry. April 27, 2000, p. 38-39).

**Responding to the Landscape**

In addition to the doodle and curved perspective paintings, Robbins began to create realistic landscape paintings soon after his return to Austin in 1998. He physically took his paints, brushes, and canvases, and went out into the environment to work. Painting directly from nature was a multi-dimensional sensory experience for Robbins. He explained:

> It's a real place at a real time. The shadows are cast at a certain angle, and I have to deal with the time element and all those changes. Actually being there - seeing it - translating it with my own eyes - through my own hands - so the painting

**Title:** ***Doodle Abstraction Series #4-A*** **(fig. 10.13)**

**Title:** ***Doodle Abstraction Series #4-B*** **(fig. 10.14)**

**Title:** ***Doodle Abstraction Series #4-C*** **(fig. 10.15)**

becomes the most pure form of recording an experience. (Interview. April 22, 2001. Audio Tape #17-A, Log [086])

Just as there was an emotional component that triggered Robbins's work on the doodle paintings, the landscapes also called forth an empathic aesthetic response. According to Robbins, he was doing what the artist Edward Hopper said that he did, " … go out and look for the subject that sends out the call" (Interview. April 22, 2001. Audio Tape #17-A, Log [164]). Robbins stands next to his landscapes, 2001 (Photograph, fig. 10.16, p. 209).

Robbins made a painting of the pigeon roost in Mayfield Park. His sensory awareness and responses to the setting were vividly revealed in the following passage. He wrote:

> The rich, dense foliage of the trees and brush stretched into a thick distance behind the cylindrical-shaped pigeon roost. The air was moist, the sky cloudy - I decided early on to capture this dark stillness, moody softness that permeated the scene. If I had not made this mental note I might have gotten lost in the painting. Later, as the clouds divided, allowing the sun to pattern the scene with a staccato brightness, like changing music from a slow dance tune to a Samba. (Journal Entry. March 26, 2001, p. 32)

**Charcoal Drawing and Oil Painting Compared**

Robbins created a number of landscape paintings and drawings between 1998 and 2002, examples include: *Culvert at the Airport* (fig. 10.17, p. 210) and *Traffic Cone* (fig. 10.18, p. 210). He was particularly fond of the charcoal drawings that he made at this time, Robbins remembered, "There is something about these drawings - I really like drawings of reality. They had a certain unified dreamlike quality for me (fig. 10.19, p. 211). The paintings (fig. 10.20, p. 211) just don't have the same imaginative quality " (Interview. September 29, 2006. Audio Tape #24-B, Log [157]).

**Teaching (Positive Influences)**

Teaching impacted Robbins's creative process in both positive and negative ways. From a positive standpoint, teaching had expanded his overall artistic knowledge. He

**Photograph: Robbins in his Apartment/Studio (fig. 10.16)**

**Title: *Culvert at the Airport* (fig. 10.17)**

**Title: *Traffic Cone* (fig. 10.18)**

**Title:** ***Charcoal Drawing (Landscape)*** **(fig. 10.19)**

**Title:** ***Oil Painting with Toyota*** **(fig. 10.20)**

posited, "It is through teaching that I understand more broadly and more deeply what I'm doing with the paint" (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [012]). Additionally, Robbins viewed teaching and painting as dynamic and interrelated processes that expanded his understanding of art as a form of visual communication. He explained:

> As I search my body of work as a painter, the same way I've searched out - how do I teach these people in classes? - I tweak it - every semester it gets a little better and worse. It guides me toward how I'm going to approach teaching to be a very effective teacher. And, I think being a very effective painter means tweaking the same way - that as I try something and I put it out there and it succeeds or doesn't succeed - it helps put me in touch with what my strengths are and how this visual language of painting does communicate, or doesn't communicate with this culture. (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [020])

**Teaching (Negative Influences)**

Robbins felt that teaching had negatively affected his artistic work in a variety of ways; he discussed two - the over-emphasis on logic, and his loyalty to the work ethic. The logical and sequential thought processes necessary for teaching art fundamentals were a source of frustration. He wrote:

> Teaching in our current school system requires that the teacher divide the creative process into identifiable and communicable parts and deliver those packets of information to the students in succession. The breaking down of the creative process in order to teach it is devastating to the art teacher as an artist. (Journal Entry. October 16, 2002, p. 28).

According to Robbins, learning institutions promoted the cognitive aspects of learning to the detriment of intuitive ways of knowing. He posited, "Academia has a way of pushing the intellect so much that we lose our ability to feel. Academia does not allow us the time or space to create from our subconscious. So much is memorizing and thinking" (Journal Entry. July 7, 2000, p. 76).

Robbins expressed the difficulty he had experienced in making the shift from his role as a teacher to that of an artist. He reflected, "When in teacher mode I am thinking in terms of verbal language, and when painting, in visual terms - it is hard to simply switch from one mode of thought to another that keeps me from making art these days" (Journal Entry. November 30, 2005, p. 84).

The toll that teaching had exacted upon Robbins was apparent in the following statement. He admitted, "I am burning out on teaching … my artwork has nothing of a chance because I am emotionally spent - I might give up teaching in the future to save my work" (Journal Entry. April 12, 2000, p. 26).

**Work Ethic**

As in the past, Robbins's work ethic prompted him to carry a heavy workload in an effort to become debt-free and self-sufficient. He taught numerous and varied classes in three different venues. His frustration was revealed in the following passage. He wrote:

> Teaching is so draining. Sometimes I think it is all so difficult, but better than painting houses for a living - one of these days my student loan will be paid off and I will reduce my teaching so I can find full days to work in the studio. (Journal Entry. Nov. 30, 2005, p. 83)

Robbins's desperation to find time to paint, coupled with his understanding of its importance to his well-being, was painfully clear. He lamented, "I absolutely need this. I need to paint. If I teach too much and I don't get a chance to paint, I start scheming about what I'm gonna do next, and next, and next, … I get cranky" (Interview. August 9, 2006. Audio Tape #21-A, Log [245]).

## Chapter XI

## Realism and Abstraction Merge: The Cycle Endures (2003-2006)

For the past 15 years Robbins weathered the stress of having his attention constantly divided. He remembered:

> I've been dealing with this since undergraduate school. Afterwards, two and a half years was spent paring everything down to basically two things - realism and doodle painting. Since I got out of graduate school the past six years has been me struggling with learning how to teach, and then having those two polar things come together and cross. (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [325])

### Merger Contemplated

Robbins had long considered bringing his two artistic styles together. Both in 2001, and again in 2002, Robbins discussed his aspirations for, and doubts about, uniting his divergent bodies of work. He stated, "I think I am just going to have to approach the realist work more loosely. Let doodling happen along with and in it" (Journal Entry. May 25, 2001, p. 71). He also expressed his skepticism:

> I guess I'll probably never really bring them both together - I mean I'm glad I have both bodies of work because when the winds do change for me, I want to be able to change from one body of work to the other. And, maybe they will come together at some point, I don' know, but I'm not going to worry about that right now - so, I feel like I don't have to choose. (Interview. October 15, 2002. Audio Tape #17-A, Log [316])

Robbins considered adding people to his visual vocabulary approximately three months before successfully merging both styles in the painting of his brother entitled,

*Jason* (fig. 11.1, p. 216). He wrote, "I want to play with form, and find images of people and I want it all to come together … and I want to accept it if it doesn't " (Journal Entry. December 7, 2002, p. 65).

***Jason***

In 2003, Robbins's vacillating artistic cycle paused briefly when the two styles came together in a single painting entitled, *Jason* (fig. 11.1, p. 216). Many of Robbins's artistic concerns meshed in this painting - space, perspective, the human figure, line, play, realism, and surrealism. Robbins recalled, "This is the first painting I've done that brings together all of my interests" (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [082]).

*Jason* was not a literal painting; instead, it challenged the viewer to make his/her own unique interpretation. Robbins explained:

> … the way that the white has got a blurry sort of effect that might suggest wings emerging, or the figure might be floating - there's a lot of questions … a lot of things that make the painting exciting … it doesn't close down, it opens up. (Interview. March 22, 2003. Audio Tape #20-A, Log [096])

**Analysis and Comparison: *Jason* and *Interior Tree***

When viewed within the context of Robbins's previous work, *Jason* appeared to be dramatically different at first, however, upon closer examination, vestiges of former interests, subjects, and imagery could be found. Twelve years separated *Jason*, and the painting he completed in undergraduate school entitled, *Interior Tree* (fig. 11.2, p. 216). Nevertheless, when viewed together the close relationship between the two became apparent.

*Jason* and *Interior Tree* were similar in a number of ways. Compositionally, the main subjects were centrally and symmetrically positioned in both paintings. The perspective lines on the ceiling in *Interior Tree*, and on the rug in *Jason*, directed our attention toward the central forms, tree or human figure, respectively. Both paintings utilized a monochromatic color scheme in varying shades of blue, thus lending a cool,

**Title: *Jason* (fig. 11.1)**

**Title: *Interior Tree* (fig. 11.2)**

somber feel to the space within each picture. Stylistically, a surreal quality was achieved in both works due to juxtapositions that deviated from our normal perception of the world, i. e., the presence of a tree growing in an interior space, and the figure of Jason painted three dimensionally, standing within a linearly drawn room.

Several differences between the two paintings should be noted. In addition to the variation in subject matter, the line work was handled uniquely in each piece. In *Jason*, linear elements were more prevalent and descriptive, serving to define most of the objects in the room. Lines accentuated surfaces, rather than the edges of forms in *Interior Tree*. The light source was clearly defined in *Interior Tree*; the skylight above the tree and cloud allowed light to filter in from above illuminating the entire space. In *Jason*, the light was more restricted. Robbins's brother appeared to be the single light source, emanating light only in the immediate area surrounding his body and he did not illuminate any of the objects in the room.

Both successful paintings, *Jason* and *Interior Tree* were the result of Robbins's consistency of purpose that had fostered his continuous artistic productivity over an extended period of time, his need to respond to internal and external stimuli, his extensive artistic education (both formal and informal), fueled by his ongoing compulsion to paint. Robbins wrote, "It takes all that I have not to become obsessive about art, I love it so much" (Journal Entry. December, 17, 2003, p. 50).

**The Human Form**

In addition to the painting of his brother Jason, Robbins created other figurative pieces. Working directly from the model, in 2003 he painted *Emily*, (fig. 11.3, p. 218), and in 2004, *John and Emily*, (Video Tape #2), and *Ann Soto* (Video Tape #3).

Robbins's characteristic frustration with visual imagery and his positive feelings for painting the human form, were both eloquently expressed in the following statement. He reflected:

> My own history as an artist has been a struggle because of my inability to define in my own mind that which has been conflicting in my work. I have enjoyed


**Title: *Emily* (fig. 11.3)**

> working from life directly, from photos, imagination, and memory, as well as loosely approaching process through repetitive applications of intuitively mixed colors, building a surface that is aesthetically pleasing, and along the way discovering that human beings and their surroundings are ultimately my interests in subject matter. (Journal Entry. March 29, 2004, p. 9)

**Return to the Cycle**

Robbins created the painting of Jason in March of 2003. By the end of April, the fervor of combining styles had faded. He explained:

> Even the painting of Jason doesn't satisfy as well as the doodles or the realism in their own ways. It is not possible for me to bring them together. It is necessary for me to do one or the other. I have been stressed out lately, maybe I need to doodle now. (Journal Entry. April 30, 2003, p. 21)

**Landscape and Intuition**

Following the notable merger of styles in the painting entitled, *Jason*, Robbins re-entered his artistic cycle of alternation. In the summer of 2004, Robbins returned to realistic landscape painting out-of-doors (fig. 11.4 & 11.5, p. 220). His responses to the environment played an important role in the selection of subject matter, and to the choices he made throughout the fabrication of the painting. He explained:

> When I go to a location to paint, I don't know exactly what I will paint. Intuitively, something grabs me and if I am lucky, by the end of the session I will have found a feeling or mood or poetic image. It is what I have always painted for in my best work. It is not conceptual. It is emotional. (Journal Entry. October 22, 2000, p. 4)

The painting entitled *Marina* (fig. 11.4, p. 220) was motivated by a sense of calm and well being that Robbins felt emanated from the scene. Robbins recalled, "It was oil on linen. It was on Lake Travis. I did it in the summer when I was trying to get into more of a regular practice. It gave me peace" (Personal Correspondence. April 3, 2007).

**Title: *Marina* (fig. 11.4)**

**Title: *Landscape on the Water* (fig. 11.5)**

***sally #2* (fig. 11.6, p. 222)**

In 2006, Robbins created the abstract doodle painting entitled, *sally #2*. (fig. 11.6, p. 222). The progress of his work was captured on videotape in its entirety. Both the techniques of Stimulate Process Recall (SPR) and the artist's Stream of Consciousness (SOC) utilized by Beittel (1973) were employed in the analysis of *sally #2*. Beittel's participants (1973) recounted what they were doing, thinking, and feeling, while viewing still photographs taken periodically throughout the progression of their drawings. Likewise, together, Robbins and I viewed the videotape of *sally #2*, from start to finish several times while he clarified his actions and described his internal experiences.

**Affect**

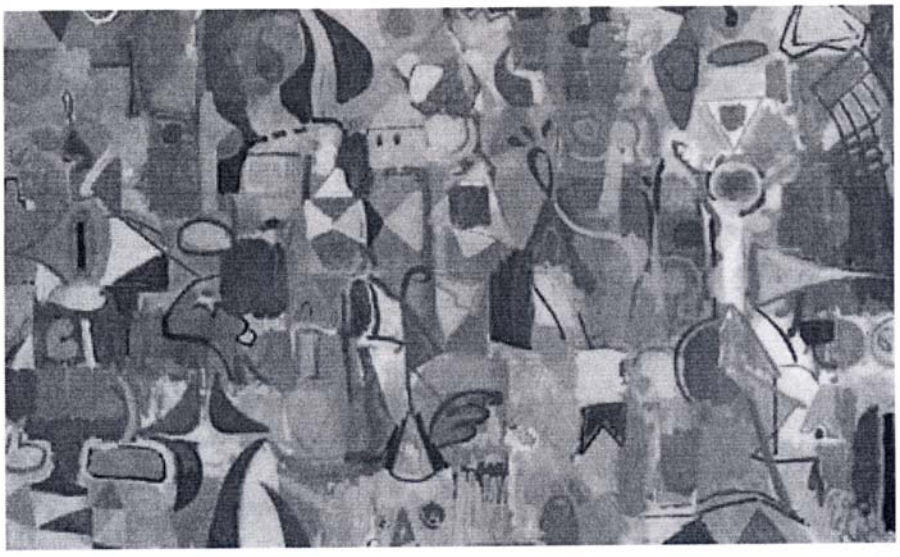
Prior to commencing work on *sally #2*, Robbins experienced a great deal of artistic indecision. He had been working from photographs of landscapes, which he rejected. Robbins admitted, "It just seemed real stale, I didn't like it so I covered it up … it didn't speak to me. I didn't want to paint these subjects anymore, but I wanted to paint [emphasis his]" (Interview. August 9, 2006. Audio Tape #21-A, Log [025]).

**Influences: *sally #1***

In an attempt to get his work on track again, Robbins began thinking about an earlier abstract painting entitled, *sally #1*, (fig. 11.7, p. 222). After it was completed, *sally #1* was rejected and painted over, just as the recent landscape painting had been. Nevertheless, having kept an image of *sally #1* in his computer, Robbins was able to transfer it to his computer screen so that he could regularly view it throughout the day. This was done in an effort to find out if the previous image held any interest for him, or if it would evoke a response from him at that point in time. He explained:

> The computer takes the image and "tiles" it - so it's actually repeated four or five times on the computer screen - it's more dense. The forms and colors have gotten shifted a little bit, maybe they're more unified - but I liked the way it looks on the computer screen. (Interview. August 9, 2006, Audio Tape #21-A, Log [070])

**Title: *sally #2* (fig. 11.6)**



**Title: *sally #1* (fig. 11.7)**

**Childhood Memories**

Powerful childhood memories of playful adventures continued to motivate Robbins throughout the process of painting *sally #2*. He remembered:

> When I was a little kid I used to like to play with these "matchbox cars' - they were a lot of fun … my dad had piled up a big pile of dirt for us to play in - so we could dig into it … dig tunnels and roads - I had a whole city - and, it was one of the most magnificent experiences - it was private, it was my little world - it was magical. And, I think in a lot of ways this painting process brings me right back to that experience - I can't wait. (Interview. August 9, 2006. Audio Tape 21-A, Log [167])

**Videotape Analysis Summary: sally #2**

In addition to prior works, and childhood memories, four additional factors contributing to its successful completion came to light while analyzing the videotape of *sally #2*. They included: limitations, play, engagement, and trust.

First, Robbins placed limitations on his materials and gestures. He painted the entire 4' X 8' canvas with a single small brush. The use of this small brush controlled the amount of paint and the size of the surface area that could be covered with each stroke. It also placed restrictions on how the brush could be used; he had to control it with his hand and fingers. This facilitated small precise strokes, rather than large sweeping strokes that could have been possible with a larger brush.

Second, a sense of fun and playfulness was exhibited throughout the production of the painting. Robbins incorporated imaginary faces, characters, and objects, along with brilliant color combinations - one after the other in fluid succession. As in the 1994 *Doodle Abstraction Series* (fig. 8.3 & 8.4, p. 179), one noticed the fanciful, yet random inclusion of an "illusionistic window" in the upper mid-section of the painting. A realistically rendered stand of pine trees sat noticeably behind the sea of abstract forms and vivid colors inhabiting the surface of the painting.

Third, one sensed that Robbins's total emersion and confidence in the artistic process served to maintain his high level of engagement throughout fabrication of the

painting. He did not follow a preconceived idea or preliminary sketch; nevertheless he painted clear and decisive strokes without hesitation. Robbins appeared to be responding to a strong impulse to paint without censoring his choices or movements.

**Re-learning to Trust**

Fourth, Robbins felt that his ability to once again harness the ability to trust his artistic instincts promoted the successful outcome of *sally #2,* (photograph of Robbins with *sally #2,* fig. 11.8, p. 225). He explained, "The lesson that I've had to re-learn - it's the process that matters - cutting loose from controlling it so much" (Interview. August 9, 2006. Audio Tape #21-A, Log [122]). In April of 2006, Robbins reaffirmed the essential role that trust played in the 1994 abstract series. He wrote:

> We are made by the failures and frustrations of our lives. We sometimes shut out the rest of the world and stew up our best work when all else fails. It is what happened when I made my doodle paintings over a decade ago. I gave up and just simply painted. (Journal Entry. April 26, 2006. p. 70)

In looking to the future, Robbins contemplated his next painting:

> I am teaching too much. I want to go back to that marina and paint the water again because maybe it will make me feel better. I think that is what inspired those paintings in the summer of '04, a search for peace. I need that right now. (Personal Correspondence. April 3, 2007)


**Photograph: Robbins in front of sally #2 (fig. 11.8)**

# Chapter XII

# SUMMARY

## Objectives

The objectives of the preceding study were first, to learn about various themes that characterized the manner in which the accomplished artist, Noel Robbins, made art in a natural setting; and second, to begin to determine the ways in which Robbins utilized cognition, intuition, and sensory experiences in his work. I observed the participation of the artist in the formation of his own creations. Additionally, I described how that process unfolded in unique ways that promoted a continuous flow of artistic productivity, and brought meaning to the life of the artist.

## Rationale

The rationale for this study included the idea that an accomplished artist, with many years of experience and a substantial body of work, had developed artistic methods, techniques, and processes, from which valuable knowledge and insights could be garnered. It was appropriate that information obtained from this important out-of-school resource was made available to students and art teachers working within an educational setting.

## Assumptions

It was assumed that a longitudinal case study of Robbins's artistic processes, procedures, and natural working environment, could serve as a foundation for other research studies. As a result of this study, art curricula, teaching/learning procedures, and facilities could be expanded to include innovative approaches to art-making, setting, and the self-analysis procedures utilized by Robbins as he worked outside of an academic setting.

## Methodology

The methodology utilized in this study combined interviews, journals, case study, participant observation, original artwork, and in-process art production. The copious amount of data: audio, visual, and textual, collected during the seven-year timeframe of this study, was transcribed, coded, summarized, and analyzed. Data from Robbins's case study was categorized in accordance with grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and monitored through peer and member checking (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998). Working together, these techniques provided a multi-dimensional understanding of the artwork and processes utilized by Robbins.

Both interview transcripts and journal entries were examined and analyzed extensively throughout the course of this study. Interviews proceeded from general topics, to more focused questions as new information surfaced and additional artwork was undertaken. Journals were read and utilized in conjunction with the interviews and the artwork being produced. Robbins acknowledged the importance he placed on his journal writing, he noted, "This journal is as much for history as my paintings" (Journal Entry. April 21, 2006, p. 65).

## ESA/PAK

Robbins's artistic process was analyzed using the Evolving Systems Approach (ESA) developed by Gruber and his associates (2001). One of the aims of ESA was to garner an understanding of unequivocal instances of creativity through case study analysis. Purpose, Affect, and Knowledge (PAK), all hallmarks of the ESA, could be productively examined by way of the intensive study of an individual life. This researcher sought to understand Robbins in a holistic manner, emphasizing the formation of insights concerning the progression, changes, and development of his artwork over an extended period of time.

This study focused on identifying ways that the rational and unconscious areas of the mind worked in tandem to produce innovative concepts. The dream, or any other unconscious manifestation (Feldman, 1994) was useless unless it connected with the rational, conscious work of the mind that purposefully sought to solve a problem; the

whole mind was pulled together in such a way that new and useful things would be created. Rugg (1963) lamented, "For a generation we have given lip service to ideas of 'the whole man' and the 'complete act of thought,' but few of us have put the full scope of the available concepts to work. We have used only half of mind and dealt with less than half of man" (p. xvi).

## Phenomenological Narrative

The final stage of analysis was the creation of the phenomenological narrative. Every attempt was made to understand and relay the events and experiences from the artist's point of view. The use of relevant visual examples of the artist's work, along with poignant quotations, and writing samples, allowed both his voice and his art to be clearly understood. Research validity (Glesne, 1999; Mertens, 1998) was established by the quality of the thick description that was included.

## Amendments

This research study was amended to include a single phenomenological narrative of the artist Noel Robbins. Three narratives had been set forth in the original proposal. Two factors influenced the decision to focus on the artistic work of one individual. First, the voluminous amount of data collected from Robbins required more time for analysis than was anticipated. Second, the other two artist/participants, Patti Troth Black and Vincent Mariani, offered valuable insights concerning their artistic work, nevertheless, obtaining a sufficient amount of video footage for the purpose of conducting a thorough examination of their artistic processes, was not possible.

## Robbins's Cycle of Artistic Change: Theoretical Considerations

Robbins's artistic development, changes in style, and the resulting artwork, created during the 15-year period from 1991-2006, were the foci of this research study.

## "Shifting Focus"

During this time, Robbins's artistic process was dominated by a continuous cycle that alternated between the styles of realism and abstraction. Analyses of incidences of pronounced artistic changes, and the ensuing periods between them, formed the heart of the phenomenological narrative. The causes, nature, and artistic outcomes associated

with Robbins's artistic changes were examined. When he switched styles, experiences embedded in the process of painting realistically were carried over into the abstract work, and vice versa. Prior, and ongoing emotionally charged states prompted and controlled his artistic redirections. It was through this cyclical rotation from realism to abstraction, and back again, that Robbins's compulsion to make art was fulfilled. The concept of "shifting focus" was developed in order to identify, describe, and account for Robbins's unique alternating pattern of change exhibited in his work.

Saturation, overflow, and tension, indicated the state in which Robbins found himself prior to an artistic shift. When working for an extended period of time in one particular style, he would eventually reach a saturation point where a shift would become imminent. It was as if there was a build-up of psychic pressure related to working within the confines of a given style that could be tolerated for only so long. Additionally, when working consciously in one style, he would continue working subconsciously in another style. When the subconscious notified his conscious mind that an artistic problem had been solved, the shift became an unavoidable necessity. According to May (1975), inspiration occurred during shifts between periods of concentration and relaxation. In Robbins's case, he appeared to have been inspired just prior to the shift.

**"Spontaneity of Opposition"**

Robbins was torn between a strong compulsion to paint realistic paintings based on external stimuli and sensory perception, and an equally strong desire to create abstract paintings that derived from impulse, memory, and/or imagination. An occurrence of this extreme mental conflict was eloquently described by Michelangelo, he wrote, " Already at 16, my mind was a battlefield: my love of pagan beauty, the male nude, at war with my religious faith. A polarity of themes and form - one spiritual, the other earthly" (Hibbard, 1974, p. 306).

The psychiatrist Albert Rothenberg had written about these opposing elements found within creative thinking. Rothenberg (1967) described a specific thought process that involved "spontaneity of opposition." It functions (Rothenberg, 1967) when the creative person was actively engaged in creating; paradox and contradiction were found

throughout many types of creative processes. According to Rothenberg, (1967), artists tried to capture diametrically opposing elements in their work; when used successfully it had the potential to be of great benefit, i. e., it could enable an architect to envision both the interior and exterior of a building at the same time.

**Three Unique Approaches**

Robbins utilized three unique approaches in the fabrication of his art. The specific approach Robbins employed directly corresponded to the clarity of the particular image with which he was working. I termed the three approaches: 1) the "Genesis Developmental" (GD), 2) the "Genesis Non-Developmental" (GND), and 3) the "Genesis Impulsive" (GI).

The GD approach was used when Robbins began with an original idea, concept, or mental image - the "genesis" that was not fully formed. He allowed his genesis to develop and undergo revisions throughout his creative process. An example of this approach is, *Studio Painting #2 (curved perspective)* (fig. 10.1, p. 194).

When utilizing the GND approach, Robbins had an original idea or genesis that was clearly perceived. Throughout fabrication, Robbins quickly sought to capture that original idea as truthfully as possible, not deviating from it in any way. An example of this approach is, *Interior Tree* (fig. 7.2, p. 167).

The GI approach was distinctly different from the preceding approaches because Robbins did not begin with a preconceived image, idea, or concept of any sort. He knew that he wanted to enter into the process of making art, however, he did not have an "idea" as such; rather there was present the "impulse to work." In the painting *sally #2* (fig. 11.6, p. 222), Robbins allowed the images to develop spontaneously as the painting progressed. The impulse to work was very strong; even so, Robbins seemed unaware and unconcerned as to the source of his impulse. One possible source could have been the painting materials themselves, or his love for the physical act of painting. Robbins had a general feeling that prompted him to begin work on *sally #2*. He looked intently at, then rubbed his hand across the canvas, next he loaded his brush, and spontaneously began to make marks on it (Videotape #5, 2006).

## Bridging In-School and Out-of-School Practices

In the overall lifetime of an artist, relatively few years were spent in an educational institution, even when advanced degrees in art were sought. Therefore, it was incumbent upon art educators to incorporate the most informed knowledge concerning out-of-school practices into their art curricula. Knowledge derived from this study was relevant to art education because insights drawn from accomplished artists working in a naturalistic setting could be carried over into an educational setting, thereby improving the student's creativity, and his/her ability to adapt to the world beyond the classroom.

## Third Pedagogical Site

The relationship between in-school and out-of-school artistic practices was formulated in conjunction with Wilson's concept of "the third pedagogical site." Over the past 30 years Wilson, (1974, 2005) advocated for the inclusion of out-of-school art practices within the school art curriculum. His interest was sparked when he discovered J. C. Holz. In 1974, Holz was an energetic ten-year old who drew profusely, crafting highly original comic book characters for long periods of time each day. This type of self-directed art production (Ulbricht, 2005, Wilson, 2005) offered an alternative to the prescribed media/technique-oriented artwork emphasized in the schools. Wilson (2005) elaborated on the phenomena of combining out-of-school with in-school practices in what he termed "the third pedagogical site" (p. 1). This was consistent with the art making process of Noel Robbins that the author analyzed.

## Micro-aesthetic Investigation

This author posited that it was only through continued micro-aesthetic investigations of artistic processes, (cognitive, intuitive, and sensory), that art educators would be able to fully embrace Dewey's (1934) belief that the connection between art and its relationship to society and nature was not only an intellectual (conscious) bond, but also an intuitive and sensory connection as well.

Both the phenomenological narrative, and the self-diagnostic methods employed in this study could be of interest to art educators, and students alike. The narrative, its accompanying illustrations, interviews, journal entries, and video recordings, offered an in-depth look at the life and work of an accomplished, practicing artist. Additionally, the diagnostic methods of videotaping and journaling, utilized throughout this study, could be adapted for use in the art classroom.

Video technology is an option that ought to be given careful consideration for use in art curricula. In much the same way that it was utilized in this study, video technology could be used as a valuable educational and diagnostic tool within the art classroom. Not only could students benefit from watching the tapes of Robbins at work in his studio, it could also be suggested that students tape themselves while making works of art. With the increased availability of video equipment, access would gradually become more easily obtainable. It is posited that the video camera is an untapped resource for conducting artistic self-analysis within educational settings.

Finally, in addition to video analysis, teachers could encourage students to begin to identify their own personal interests and visual imagery through the autobiographical process of journaling. This could be in written, or audio/visual formats, i. e., text-based journal writing, such as Robbins undertook, or through sketchbooks, photographs, and/or audio/video-based diaries. These self-diagnostic methods would offer students the opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of who they are.

Education in general, and art education in particular values the promotion of self-knowledge, self-discovery, and self-understanding within each student. To assist art teachers in this endeavor, insights garnered from this study have the potential to be adapted for use in the classroom. Reflecting on the power of self-revelation, Robbins penned these words: "Know who you are now by knowing who you have always been, then you can find yourself in your paintings and drawings, and in your other actions and works" (Journal Entry. April 7, 2000, p. 22).

**Figure 6.1**

**Creative Life Chronology by: Noel Robbins**

**1968** - Born: Austin, Texas. December 22nd

**1972** - Discovered coloring books to be greatly satisfying -
father, later in life, remembered I "would color for hours" at early age

**1976** - Studies tap dancing for two weeks

**1977-1982** - Studies magic tricks with "The Great Scott" and joins "Ring 60" magic club
Performs magic shows for neighborhood kids
Has business card created for this purpose and makes money at birthday parties
Finishes with magic in 7th grade when realizes it is not "cool"

**1980-1987** - Studies percussion in school: concert band, marching band and jazz band
Finds it is "cool" to be a drummer in the 7th grade
Plays independently in rock bands throughout high school
Enjoys drawing fellow band members for laughs

**1987** - Interns at KVUE television station while in high school
Begins collecting comic books and aspiring to draw comics
Sells drums to help pay for college
When starting college, majors in radio, television, and film
Takes Life-Drawing I for elective college credit at Austin Community College
Begins to feel a love for making art

**1988** - Takes Life-Drawing II and Art Appreciation at Austin Community College
Changes College Major to Studio Art
Enters University of Texas at Austin, Department of Fine Arts

**1988-1992** - Studies Video Art and Film Installation with Bill Lumberg
Bill teaches to trust the process
Studies Video Art with Regina Vater at Austin Community Television
Regina and Bill teach poetry of existence and natural expression through process
Studies Painting with Michael Mogavero, Bradley Peterson, Sarah Canright, Dan Southerland, Robert Levers, Richard Jordan and Peter Saul
Mostly learns tough, independent creative attitude from combined faculty

**1991** - Creates two doodle paintings in Richard Jordan's summer painting class
Doodle paintings originating from surrealist automatic drawing processes
Jordan praises them, that "they are like work recently seen in New York"

**1992** - Learns Josef Albers' Interaction of Color from Robert Levers
Levers encourages Noel, "You could give painting a run for its money"
Learns from Peter Saul that school is not important, but art is
Completes Studio Art program at University of Texas at Austin

**1992-1994** - Works with father painting houses to make a living
Creates paintings and sells some at coffee shops
Explores Realist and Expressionist landscape subjects
Many discussions with father about the Holy Bible and living a spiritual life
Joins the Episcopal Church, attracted to the structured Liturgy of the Church

**1994-1995** - Is invited to show paintings at Wally Workman Gallery
Stops painting houses
Creates art full time, lives on savings and credit cards
Gives up on making art for sale at gallery and doodles for fun of process
Many paintings develop quickly and happily in this doodle process
Invited to show in Fort Worth at Forest Park Art Space
Painting reviewed in Circa Ca.: the Texas-Based Journal of Contemporary Art
Applies for graduate school at Yale University, Rhode Island School of Design, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Texas Christian University

**1995** - Begins graduate study at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

**1996** - Marries Fran Baas and moves her to Chicago to live together
Problems emerge in marriage after first month
Marriage counseling and individual psychiatric counseling begin
Begins to desire "perceptual painting" as practiced by teachers Susanna Coffey, Tim Doud and other faculty / realist painters
Begins study of art history with Dennis Adrian, focus on figurative painting
Attempts to bring perceptual realist painting together with doodle painting

**1997** - Graduates from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in Painting & Drawing
Shown interest in work by Gwenda Jay Gallery, Chicago
Visit with Gwenda Jay, not enough mature work to impress, not productive
Exhibits at the Contemporary Arts Workshop, Chicago
Exhibits and starts teaching at Hinsdale Center for the Arts
Teaches at Moraine Valley Community College and Morton College

Teaches at Suburban Fine Arts Center

**1998** - Separates from Fran, moves back to Austin

Takes up realist paintings that emphasize relationships of people to nature

Begins teaching at Austin Community College

**1999** - Divorces Fran Baas

Starts teaching at Austin Museum of Art at Laguna Gloria

Works for father again painting houses to make ends meet

Attempts doodle paintings, don't feel right, they fail

Realist paintings showing no promise and are hard won

**2000** - Becomes subject in doctoral study of learning and creativity with Brucie Bowman

Begins teaching independently in apartment

Creates doodle paintings with gouache on paper

Wins a place in New American Paintings with new doodle paintings

Receives interests from galleries in Scottsdale, AZ and San Antonio

Gallery - interests fail to produce shows

**2001** - Moves to larger living space to increase independent study class size

Independent study classes succeed

Paints realist image of Mansfield Dam after terrorist attacks

**2002** - Buys house on Koenig Lane to separate living space from teaching studio

Wins New American Paintings placement with realist work

No galleries show interest in realist work

**2003** - Attempts doodle paintings, don't feel right, they fail

Classes developing well at ACC, Laguna Gloria and at studio school

Continues realist paintings, but begins to focus on "plein air" practices

Joins the Catholic Church

**2004** - Creates small body of works over summer months of "plein air" realist paintings
Works sell mostly to students from studio website
Frustrated about lack of time during fall/spring school months for
creative work

**2005** - Zoning of house is changed by city to commercial
Attempts doodle paintings again, but too theoretical, too conceptual
Continues "plein air" works

**2006** - City employee visits to force action on re-zoning of property
Begins steps towards conforming with city of Austin guidelines
Creates first doodle painting worth merit after years of struggle
Success in doodle painting attributed to earliest lessons in art, trust
in process
Today feeling on top of the world
2006 is the "Year of Healing" in the Catholic Church
Artist attributes finding his doodle work again to grace of God

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